The Human Services Workforce Initiative

MULTIPLE WORKFORCES

Reforming the Human Services Workforce: The Essential Role of Life-Experienced Workers





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February 2007

With support from Cornerstone for Kids

This report was undertaken by Children and Family Futures with the generous assistance of Cornerstones for Kids. The findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of CFF and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Cornerstones for Kids.

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Cornerstones for Kids Introduction

The Human Services Workforce Initiative (HSWI) is focused on the frontline workers serving vulnerable children and families. HSWI's premise is that human services matter. Delivered well, they can, and do, positively impact the lives of vulnerable children and families, often at critical points in their lives.

We believe that the quality of the frontline worker influences the effectiveness of services they deliver to children and families. If workers are well-trained and supported, have access to the resources that they need, possess a reasonable workload and are valued by their employers, it follows that they will be able to effectively perform their jobs. If, however, they are as vulnerable as the children and families that they serve, they will be ineffective in improving outcomes for children and families.

Unfortunately, all indications today are that our frontline human services workforce is struggling. In some instances poor compensation contributes to excessive turnover; in others an unreasonable workload and endless paperwork renders otherwise capable staff ineffective; and keeping morale up is difficult in the human services fields and it is remarkable that so many human services professionals stick to it, year after year.

HSWI's mission is to work with others to raise the visibility of, and sense of urgency about, workforce issues. Through a series of publications and other communications efforts we hope to:

- Call greater attention to workforce issues.
- Help to describe and define the status of the human services workforce.
- Disseminate data on current conditions.
- Highlight best and promising practices.
- Suggest systemic and policy actions which can make a deep, long term difference.

Early in our work we became aware that there are, in each field, tensions around professionalism. Two seemingly competing forces or trends are at play in the human services workforce arena. In some instances there is strong advocacy for increased professionalization of frontline staff—e.g., differential credentialing of child care workers and early childhood education teachers. The competing tug is towards persons with direct experiences relevant to the work—e.g., utilizing the services of parents whose children used to be in foster care, using recovering substance abusers as recovery coaches, and favoring a staff made up of persons more closely tied to the community being served than most degreed professionals would be. In this paper Children and Family Futures looks at the differing contributions that professional preparation and formal credentials bring in contrast to the value of direct, personal experiences and finds room for the benefits of each.

Additional information on the human services workforce, and on HSWI, is available at www.cornerstones4kids.org.

Cornerstones for Kids, 2007

Executive Summary

Efforts to reform the human services workforce, with special reference to four fields that serve children and families—child welfare, child care, youth development, and juvenile justice—should not overlook the role of life-experienced workers (LEWs). These workers, who may currently number more than 300,000, can play a critical role in expanding both the numbers and the skill set of the staff in these settings.

At a time when demographic pressures and financial pressures of health and retirement benefits are affecting turnover and workforce reform, human resources leaders should carefully assess the value added by these workers who have experience as consumers or aides. In all four systems, there are examples of LEWs: parents and youth who are former child welfare clients, child care aides with experience in parenting children with special needs, youth workers and juvenile justice workers who have been in the system themselves.

The benefits brought by these workers include greater cultural and linguistic connections with clients, an understanding of the operations of the systems, a developmental sense of how clients make progress and how they can respond to setbacks, and the ability to conduct outreach as part of recruitment and monitoring of client performance.

However, despite a number of pilot projects in each of the four areas, most assessments of the future of the workforce in these four fields do not address the potential for LEWs to provide relief to professionals and new assets to an agency's staffing pattern. Barriers encountered in expanding the use of LEWs include the stigma associated with having been a former client, a concern about a lack of formal education and an assumption that this equates with a lack of competencies, and a concern that LEWs may be part of an overall attempt to deprofessionalize and privatize the workforce. The more community-based the agency is, and the less stigmatized the worker's prior experience in the system, the more widely accepted LEWs seem to be.

Recommendations for further action to expand the use of LEWs in human services workforce reform include collecting better information on their current presence in these four fields, seeking better evaluation data on the actual contribution of these workers to better client outcomes, specifying more clearly the competencies that education and experience are intended to produce, and working with representatives of higher education and professional associations to target new curricula and training efforts on LEWs.

Since the factors that lead to greater attention to LEWs seem likely to increase, those working to reform human services in these four fields need to increase their attention to the potential of LEWs to a level that is more proportionate to their numbers in the workforce of today and tomorrow. Success in expanding their role and their value will depend significantly upon recognition that LEWs are critical supplements to professional workers, not replacements for them.

Introduction

More than three million human services workers are staffing public and private agencies in the fields of child welfare, youth development, juvenile justice, and child care.[1] The education and experience of these workers range widely, from those with professional graduate degrees to others with high school educations or less, from those with decades of service to those who have just begun their work in these fields.

Among these workers—and others who might join them in years to come as the human services workforce ages, retires, and is replaced—are some with a special kind of experience: life experience "in the systems." These workers and potential workers have been through foster care, they have been through treatment and are on the path of recovery, they may have served time in detention and other forms of incarceration, and they may have been helped by child care and employment programs as parents who were both clients and staff of those programs. Such workers bring an authentic life experience to their work, and it is that experience that this report seeks to illuminate as an under-appreciated, under-emphasized asset in the human services workforce.

As part of a linked set of projects under the umbrella of the Annie E. Casey-funded Human Services Workforce Initiative, administered by Cornerstone for Kids, this report will review the current track record and potential for what we will call *life-experienced workers* (LEWs). Although life-experienced workers exist throughout the health and human services—and beyond—this report will adopt the framework of the overall HSWI project and focus on the four fields of child welfare, child care, youth development, and juvenile justice.

This report will explore three questions:

- What are the implications for the human services workforce—especially those workers with life experience—for efforts to expand the use of best practices and innovative programs in child- and family-serving agencies?
- What contributions can these workers make to human services, and what evidence is there that this contribution improves outcomes?
- What barriers may be encountered by efforts to make fuller and more effective use of these workers?

In the report *The Unsolved Challenge of System Reform: The Quality of Frontline Human Services Workers*, there were few references to workers with life experience. At one point, the report mentions that "Some child welfare workers are licensed social workers, while others are paraprofessionals with titles such as "case aide," "family advocate," or "family support worker."[2] A 2004 report by the American Public Human Services Association on the child welfare work force, based on a survey of state agencies, essentially ruled the topic of paraprofessional workers beyond the scope of the paper.[3] And Paul Light's paper on "The Health of the Human Services Workforce," based on a 2003 survey across all four fields, did not address life-experienced workers as an option or a current resource.[4]

Nevertheless, there are hundreds of thousands of these workers already providing services and support in these four systems. Our assessment is premised on a belief that current LEWs already in these four systems are more important resources than they are recognized to be and that potential new LEWs could be an important resource in overall human services workforce reform, expansion, and replacement. In conducting this review, we have drawn upon available materials on paraprofessionals, mentors, coaches, New Careers, and several other formulations of the tasks of life-experienced workers, some of which date as far back as the 1960's. We also review the concerns that are sometimes expressed about these workers as a problem or a threat, based on perceptions of their lack of qualifications or their hiring based on lowered standards that they represent.

What are life-experienced workers?

In a variety of professions, former clients have been recognized to bring special attributes to the process of helping current clients. A woman who is in recovery understands some facets of addiction that professionals who have not "been there" may not fully appreciate. A former foster youth can identify with the pain of moving repeatedly from one group home to another in a way that an MSW-holding professional may only be able to imagine from a distance.

Yet at the outset, we want to make clear that we do not intend to denigrate the qualifications, hard work, academic credentials, and practical experience of professionals as we focus our attention on the special skills of LEWs. As will be clear, the greatest potential for LEWs in many cases will come from three possibilities:

- Their potential to help professionals carry out professional tasks by handling non-professional tasks,
- Their potential to work with professionals in critical segments of professional work in which life experience is useful, including client engagement and retention, and
- Their potential to become professionals themselves.

So it is the needed connections between professionals and LEWs that will be emphasized, rather than focusing only on how they differ and how they sometimes come into conflict.

We are defining life-experienced workers[5] broadly, as including the following:

- peers of consumers who provide services and supports,
- former consumers who are working in helping systems,
- residents of a common area or persons from the same culture who provide outreach and other linking services and supports,
- human service workers with credentials who have earlier life experience *in addition to* their credentials.

LEWs are also defined in part by their education. In Paul Light's survey of human service workers, less educated workers made up a small but significant portion of the overall work force; only 2 percent did not finish high school, and 16 percent were high school graduates. This would be a considerably larger number if child care workers from both licensed and unlicensed settings were included, as shown in the table below.

Age may enter into the LEW definition in some arenas, to the extent that some of the systems are addressing the growing availability of recently retired, healthy former workers as a resource. These people, whose life and professional experience can be extensive, represent an extraordinary untapped resource, both in the fields from which they have retired and in human services arenas to which their experience can be adapted. On the other end of the spectrum there are youth workers who are themselves youth, working in peer education and other programs. That adaptation is modeled by the example of New York City's use of retired police officers to assist with and train child welfare staff in investigative techniques. With 22 million workers over 55, this resource is an important part of the overall picture of the experience base available to human services agencies. The child welfare section will discuss this potential resource further.

At a more impressionistic and personal level, definitions that emerged from the work of a project in California that assessed the role of consumer staff were also helpful.

> Consumer staff means:
> - "someone who learns from their own experience and uses this knowledge to help people going through similar situations,"
> - "someone who is both receiving services themselves and helping others at the same time,"
> - "someone who is going through the transition from client to staff."[6]

How many LEWs are there?

As with the rest of the human services workforce in these four fields, it is very difficult to develop even broad approximations of the total numbers of workers with life experience in these systems. This seems especially true in the child care and youth development fields and to a lesser degree in child welfare and juvenile justice. The table below includes estimates from the original Casey study.

	Numbers in Total Field[7]	Estimated Number of LEWs	Other Factors
Child welfare	900,000 inclusive of paraprofessionals	Case aides are more common in salary and personnel structure than in other systems	74,000 CASA volunteers, some are LEWs
Child care	1.5 million in licensed centers and family homes	Plus as many as 800,000 unlicensed providers[8]	Parents serve as unpaid aides in some programs; some teacher aides in schools work in preschool age groups
Juvenile justice	300,000	Unknown number of ex-offenders	
Youth workers	2 million plus 2 million part-time	Part-time workers include many LEWs	

These numbers make it very difficult to construct an overall estimate of LEWs across the four fields. Yet it does not seem over-reaching to state that in each of the four fields, there are already significant numbers of LEWs who play important roles and that across the fields, there may already be as many as half a million workers who meet the definitions we have set forth.

The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics section on "social and human services assistants" states

> Social and human service assistants held about 352,000 jobs in 2004. More than half worked in the health care and social assistance industries. One in three were employed by State and local governments, primarily in public welfare agencies and facilities for mentally disabled and developmentally challenged individuals…. *The number of social and human service assistants is projected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations between 2004 and 2014—ranking the occupation among the most rapidly growing*. Many additional job opportunities will arise from the need to replace workers who advance into new positions, retire, or leave the workforce for other reasons. There will be more competition for jobs in urban areas than in rural areas, but qualified applicants should have little difficulty finding employment. Faced with rapid growth in the demand for social and human services *many employers increasingly rely on social and human service assistants to undertake greater responsibility for delivering services to clients.* Demand for social services will expand with the growing elderly population, who are more likely to need these services. In addition, more social and human service assistants will be needed to provide services to pregnant teenagers, the homeless, the mentally disabled and developmentally challenged, and substance abusers. Some private agencies have been employing more social and human service assistants in place of social workers, who are more educated and, thus, more highly paid. Job training programs also are expected to require additional social and human service assistants. As social welfare policies shift focus from benefit-based programs to

> work-based initiatives there will be more demand for people to teach job skills to the people who are new to, or returning to, the workforce.[9] [emphasis added]

The emphasis upon employers who are increasingly relying on assistants suggests that the growth in the broad field, combined with replacement needs, may create new opportunities for less-credentialed workers.

Cross-Cutting Issues Affecting Life-Experienced Workers

As will be clear in the report, we have benefited greatly from our colleagues in the HSWI effort who are working in their own fields and across the fields. Some of them have raised issues that overlap with our concerns for LEWs, whether they are defining these workers as we do or in different ways.

In a national meeting on workforce issues in child welfare, the overall task was well-framed:

> How can the human services recruit, develop, and retain a quality workforce? How can system reform efforts assure that frontline staff have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to successfully work in new ways?[10]

Framed this way, the emphasis in HSWI is upon *frontline staff*, not solely professional staff. With all frontline staff in the spotlight, based on their direct contact with and effect on the children and families that are their clients, the focus is upon a mixture of hundreds of thousands of non-professionals and professionals who are in the front lines together.

The issue of LEWs, as presented in the background material for the HSWI meeting held in Baltimore in September 2005, was

> How should the HSWI look at the differing contributions that professional preparation and credentials bring versus the value of direct, personal experiences? Is a "quality workforce" synonymous with a credentialed workforce?

It is also important to point out that a substantial portion of the HSWI workforce identified by Casey as the original three million already *have* life experience of some kind. This is especially true in the child care and youth development fields and to a lesser degree in child welfare and juvenile justice. Life experience is part of the reason that many of these workers went into human services work, through traditional channels. Some of these life-experienced workers are full professionals, and others are filling positions as case aides, teacher aides, and recreation assistants and may not yet have any professional credentials.

So the way the HSWI issues are framed matters greatly. If the question is

- How can workers in the system now get more help and support?

then the answers will be found by focusing on those workers and their needs. But if the question is framed as

- How can workers now in the system be augmented by new workers who will bring new attributes to the whole workforce, while at the same time providing support for workers now in the system?

then two sets of workers come into focus—those now in the workforce and those who could be.

The case for LEWs as a valuable addition to the human services workforce

This section reviews six separate elements of the case for expanded attention to LEWs, compiled from written materials and our interviews. These are, at this point, *claims* for the efficacy of LEWs, not proof. Later we will describe the evaluations and other assessments that provide selected examples of evidence of the effectiveness of LEWs, but here we are first describing the claimed benefits.

1. Client engagement: LEWs are able to build stronger ties to clients, based on their own experiences in the system, their own diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and their own familiarity with the geographic areas in which services are provided. As a result, client outreach and identification, engagement, and retention can be enhanced by the work of LEWs. Empathy with clients is easier for former clients, in this perspective, and empathy with clients is seen as an attribute of workers that leads to engagement and retention. Sometimes this is described as a strength; sometimes this is described as the result of having shared a personal disability and understanding its effects in one's life.

   As summarized in the report on consumer staff mentioned above,

   > Consumer staff were found to be intimately familiar with all these treatment systems enabling them to help other clients negotiate the oftentimes frightening or non-responsive systems thus helping to increase access to services (Weibel, 1993). The former consumers also challenged unacknowledged stigma and biases toward consumers in the different delivery systems (Dixon, et al.1994). Weissman and Brown (1995) reported that "In addition to being able to establish rapport and gain access, there is every indication that 'natural' or 'indigenous' leaders can themselves be an intervention, by serving as positive role models and believable message bearers."[11]

2. Follow-up and aftercare: LEWs can conduct follow-up and after-care support to clients, because of their familiarity with "life after services" and with the challenges of recovery and avoiding further incarceration. This relies upon the special potential of LEWs in providing "services integration over time"—the critical role of aftercare in many systems, in which peer support sustains the help and networking originally provided by more intensive and professionalized services and does so for a longer period of support than duration of the initial services.[12]

3. Improved support for current professionals: LEWs can assist with caseload management and other tasks, such as client intake, transportation, and outreach, which free up professionals for professional work, with the effect of reducing client caseloads.

4. Parent support roles: LEWs who are parents are especially valuable participants in the services and support systems for children, because of their understanding of parenting and its demands and their ability to draw on their own experience as parents in urging new parents to respond to the needs of their children. In outreach to other parents who are clients or the caretakers for clients, these LEWs draw on both life experience in their communities and the unique experience of being a parent.

5. Evaluation and feedback: LEWs can assess the impact of programs through their contacts with clients, their ability to gather demographic data, and their ability to conduct formal and informal focus groups and other feedback mechanisms. Clients may tell them how they feel about a program more candidly than they would tell a professional, providing feedback that is more honest and thus more valuable.

6. Source of new recruits: LEWs provide a source of talent for aging/retiring human service workers because some LEWs are younger and want professional positions.

For each of these claimed benefits, there is a range of evidence, from persuasive to very preliminary, that these benefits in fact have been achieved in an evaluated project. For example, for the claimed benefit of client engagement, there exists literature on measurable outcomes that have resulted from such projects using LEWs to improve engagement and retention. For the demographic argument, while it makes intuitive sense to argue that LEWs are a source of new and replacement workers, there is no study we could locate that assesses the actual in-flow of LEWs, since personnel systems rarely record or retrieve such information.

The underlying theory

In addition to these hoped-for benefits of expanded use of LEWs, there are also more theoretical frameworks that can be used to make the case for LEWs. Some of these claims date back to the "New Careers" movement of the 1960's and even earlier, while others rest upon a theory of the benefits of a reciprocal exchange between a helper and a helped client. Briefly, these can be summarized as follows:

1. The paraprofessional literature is extensive, from its origins in New Careers[13] and a career development theory of paraprofessionals. Two of the founders of New Careers, Pearl and Riesman, referred to "ways of creating new helpers" and the benefits of transforming a recipient into a provider of help, with empowerment for the giver and empathetic support for the recipient.

2. Within education, there is extensive content on the use of paraprofessionals in classrooms; this carries over into early care and education.[14]

3. There is also a literature on "peer helpers" and mentors.[15] These workers have been given cultural relevance in the use of positions such as *promotoras* as health

and family outreach workers in numerous community-based health programs, including teen pregnancy prevention efforts.

4. The recovery movement, emphasizing how much support can be given by another person in recovery who has a longer history of recovery, provides an important rationale for the segment of LEWs that work in the addiction field with youth and parents, which is relevant to child welfare and to juvenile justice.[16] The self-help dimension of Alcoholics Anonymous is a well-known antecedent of later self-help movements that emphasized the power and responsibility of persons in recovery to help others who are newer to the process.

5. Faith-based programs view life experience as valuable when it includes a religious or spiritual orientation that is believed to be of positive benefit to clients; youth programs staffed with a spiritual dimension have been evaluated as effective in some cases.[17]

6. A final conceptual foundation for LEWs is based on the efforts over several decades by community colleges and four-year institutions to develop credible mechanisms for awarding units, degrees, and credentials based on life experience that is equated with specific professional competencies, in the same way that someone can "test out" of a language requirement and be awarded credit for that skill and knowledge.[18]

A distinction that may be important in assessing the role of LEWs is the difference between life experience that is largely positive, e.g., working as a teacher aide based on parenting status or serving as a translator, and life experience that may be more often perceived as negative, e.g., addicts in recovery, ex-offenders, etc. Some professionals have great difficulty imagining that former clients have something to offer them—or other clients.

Forces likely to affect the use of LEWs

An initial scan of the policy environment suggests that at least four factors seem likely to affect the use of LEWs:

- Demographic pressures on the work force that will lead to substantial increases in retirement and turnover of professional staff,

- Continuing efforts to improve the diversity and cultural competence of staff,[19]

- Fiscal pressures as a result of federal deficits and greater pressure on state and local government to use full-cost accounting for their health and retirement systems, in ways that may increase the search for less expensive alternatives to full-time, full-benefits staffing,[20]and

- Legal pressures on state and local agencies for compliance with federal mandates for outcomes-defined services improvement, which may also include efforts to assess caseload ratios in ways that may affect professional-nonprofessional balance. As discussed in child welfare in particular, the issues of caseload ratios have led some reform-oriented studies to call for support from paraprofessional staff, though not specifically from LEWs.

Special features of the four areas: LEWs and children and family services

In the four areas which are the focus of the HSWI project, there are important differences in approaches to and use of LEWs. As a field, early care and education, for example, makes extensive use of teacher and classroom/parent aides, in roles that are widely accepted. Child welfare, in contrast, has fewer structural opportunities for LEWs in most agencies, but several recent models will be reviewed in this assessment.

In general, however, the hierarchies of levels of education, training, and experience that exist in other systems are not as evident in "flatter" children and family services systems. In the military, law enforcement, and the health sectors, there are more intermediate-level positions, such as non-commissioned officers, civilian support staff, and health aides. In child and family agencies, a more stark division usually exists between professionals and clerical or administrative staff. LEWs represent a gradation in staffing qualifications that may combine professional and administrative roles in ways that challenge a more bifurcated personnel structure. A question this raises is whether child and family services agencies are not seen as professionalized enough—or able to pay their workers enough—to allow delegation of professional tasks to nonprofessional workers.

To make the point in concrete terms, social workers in the child welfare system may be required to drive their clients to appointments because the extra cost of LEWs who could play such a role and thus free up social workers does not seem justified to policymakers and supervisors. As we will see, the linked effects of status, stigma, and pay levels have powerful consequences for LEWs in child and family services.

Different types of assignments and roles

Earlier, we specified four types of LEWs, based on their origins as peers, former clients, neighborhood residents, or professionals already in the system. These four categories can be added to five roles that have emerged from our review of LEWs to create a matrix that can serve as an initial framework for describing LEWs across the four fields.

The five roles across the top of the matrix range roughly from those with the least to those with the most responsibilities. Staff aides performing largely clerical functions and data entry do not directly contact clients, in contrast with client support and client engagement roles where the LEW is in direct contact with the client, either through less substantive roles like driving them to appointments or more demanding roles including motivational interviewing in recruiting clients and mentoring during treatment and aftercare.[21] These roles could also be subdivided by voluntary and paid employment, since some parents, for example, play virtually professional roles in voluntarily work with parents of disabled children, referring them to services and advising them on advocacy strategies. Where a box in the matrix is left blank, there do not at present seem to be accepted variations of LEW assignments that provide these functions.

	Staff aide/ clerical/ data entry	**Outreach and client support**	**Case aide/ client engagement**	**Apprentice/intern/ professional-to be roles**	**Full professional role**
Peers		Child care parent aides			Youth workers with professional roles
Former consumers			Recovery mentors		Client liaison staff on a multi-disciplinary team
Residents/ parents	Teacher aides	Transporting clients	Teacher aides conducting parent education	Teacher aides in training programs	
Life-experienced professionals				Social work students with client experience	Frontline professionals and supervisors

Barriers

The report will assess barriers specific to each field, but there are clearly some that are generic. These include

1. Information gaps: LEWs may not be seen as significant enough as a segment of the work force to be the subject of separate data collection. As the CPS report "What Counts?" makes clear, the data systems in human services agencies are generally inadequate to the task of keeping senior policy leaders and agency managers aware of major trends in their workforces, including turnover, vacancy control, and performance management.[22] The implications of these shortcomings for expansion of LEWs include the lack of information on the life experience that does exist in the current workforce, information on the links between LEWs and the professionalized workforce, and tenure, promotion, and education data on

LEWs broken out separately from the rest of the work force. When data systems are upgraded, understandably the focus is upon the most experienced and best credentialed workers rather than those with less formal education and experience.

2. Attitudinal barriers: Professionals may resent sharing status and roles with less-qualified workers; Paul Light's survey[23] reported on HS workers who already regard their *professional* co-workers as incompetent. HS professionals may seek lower-level staff support for low-prestige "backup" roles, but not necessarily for client-centered roles. Closely related are the attitudinal barriers to former clients. The stigma of experience as a consumer of services and a former client has already been mentioned. The stigma issues include less education, less pay, no credentials, and, as discussed above, the further barriers of criminal records or a history of perceived anti-social behavior, such as child abuse or substance abuse.

3. Related, but requiring separate treatment, is the set of attitudinal barriers that affect all efforts to increase diversity—a mixture of institutional racism and a lack of information about race and culture that may impair attempts to add life experience when it is brought into the organization by new workers whose race, ethnicity, and culture may differ significantly from those of existing workers. To the extent that LEWs are more diverse, this issue requires attention.

4. Defining workforce quality solely in terms of credentials and amount of education may lower the perceived relevance of life experience; it also assumes that higher education is equivalent to acquiring competency, which may not always be the case. At the same time, there is the next challenge.

5. Defining competency clearly: Here the challenge is specifying the competencies needed by HSWF professionals in each of the four fields, in order to give life experience adequate credit for its contribution toward competencies, without threatening academic institutions and advanced-degree holders who teach and have mastered other subjects.[24]In each of the four areas, as will be discussed, progress has been made toward specifying what competency really consists of in these fields, but those efforts still tend to rely more on on-the-job experience, rather than life experience.

6. The lack of clear job ladders out of LEW roles up to more professionalized positions may create disincentives for workers to enter LEW positions.

7. Disincentives for significant use of LEWs based on reimbursement rates: state and federal reimbursement formulas are biased toward higher-educated professionals, typically increasing funding if higher-educated staff are used, regardless of experience or outcomes. In some categorical funding streams, including some portions of Medicaid, education levels are equated with performance levels, with the result that some LEWs, even though they are paid less than full professionals, can be expensive to hire due to lower reimbursement rates.

8. Related to this issue is the overarching issue of how LEWs fit into pay scales and differences in salaries and wages that ignore life experience. Here the barrier is both the low pay received by LEWs and the perception by some professionals and their organizations that wider use of LEWs is really not programmatically based, but about lowering salary costs for the whole organization. The pay barrier is compounded in considering expanded use of LEWs when there is a perception that deprofessionalization is a political or fiscal agenda.[25] Unions representing service workers have encountered internal tension, as workers at higher and lower levels perceive expansion of lower-level positions very differently; university professors oppose expansion of adjunct faculty positions, nurses express concern about nurses' aides and their effects on patient safety, and so on.[26] As unions seek to organize both professionals and lower-income service workers, careful balancing acts will continue to be necessary. Although there are few references in current literature to concerns about widespread deprofessionalization as it relates to LEWs, it seems likely that any significant expansion of LEWs in these four fields would encounter some increased concerns about the perceived negative effects of deprofessionalization, and making the case for LEWs would require taking these concerns into account.

9. Finally, there may be too little outcomes data to back up the theoretical and intuitive claims for the value of LEWs. The range of material that assesses the quality and training of the children and youth-related work force is growing, as noted in numerous publications that are part of the overall Human Services Workforce Initiative. But those that identify the experience base of these workers are much less common.

The professional-paraprofessional debate

There is a literature on evaluation of programs for children and families that makes the case, often in the context of evidence-based practice, that staffing by qualified professionals is a critical ingredient of effective programs. The early care and education literature discusses the benefit of quality training and education for teachers. In the child welfare/home visiting arena, David Olds has issued warnings about home visiting programs staffed by paraprofessionals as being less effective than those with professional staffing.[27] However, Neil Guterman has raised important questions about the quality and training of home visitors who are part of a child abuse prevention approach, describing a polarized debate between advocates for professionally trained, degree-holding nurses and paraprofessionals, with the Hawaii Healthy Start model on one side and Olds programs on the other.[28] Guterman touches on life experience in his discussion of the two approaches:

> Using trained paraprofessionals emphasizes a somewhat "softer" approach to home visitation. This latter approach tends to place greater emphasis on the importance of the relationship of the worker to the family and on shared life experiences and backgrounds between worker and family, particularly between a broader ethnic and community context….Those programs…emphasize workers' personal experiential understanding of the families' life experiences.

Further, Guterman raises questions about Olds' evaluations, suggesting the groups compared were not equivalent. Guterman cites extensive evaluation results that indicate that median "engagement rates" (a measure of client involvement in the program used across programs) were not higher for either professionals or paraprofessionals. Finally, Guterman focuses on specialized skills, including diagnosis as a critical factor in home visiting and the ability to network with a wide array of partner agencies, which, he notes, does not automatically come with either professional or paraprofessional backgrounds.

This debate becomes either-or only when one staffing pattern is pitted against another in program design. The broader question, it would seem, is how those LEW skills that are based on life experience can supplement, rather than substitute for, the professional skills of workers with more formal education.

The debate about higher education credentialing, worker quality, and curriculum quality

The sheer numbers of workers in the human service workforce raise another question that has powerful institutional consequences: what is the appropriate role of higher education in providing credentials for life-experienced workers and others who are not presently in professional categories? Four problems intersect in this area:

- The inability of higher education to provide adequate training for the full number of new professional workers who will need higher education, pre-service credentials, and in-service training,
- The desire of LEWs to get those credentials in order to raise their pay, prestige, and expertise,
- The debate over how much significance should be given to life experience in awarding academic credits and standing, and
- The expansion of non-traditional, alternative higher education pathways and methods of awarding credits.

The demographic pressures to replace retiring workers seem likely to lead to an expansion of alternative means of credentialing professionals, in ways that will raise important issues of quality and cost. For LEWs, some of whom are older, have children, and have less time to go through a 4-6 year enrollment in undergraduate and graduate education, nontraditional means of education will become very appealing because they may be both faster and cheaper.

The appeal of various credentials also depends on what the different fields are going to require in the way of credentialing—which clearly differs from field to field. If Master's in Social Work graduates are defined as what is needed to fill the gap[29]in child welfare, for example, the gap is immense. As the data cited in the following section on child welfare turnover make clear, the total number of new MSWs produced annually represents less than 10 percent of the gap in the child welfare field.

If, in contrast, Associate's-level, two-year degree programs are the critical credential desired for ECE workers, the existing networks of community colleges and other training programs can make a much larger contribution to closing the gap. There are now nearly 1,200 regionally accredited community colleges located throughout the country, serving

more than 11 million students or nearly half of all U.S. undergraduates. In many ways, it would appear that community colleges have a major advantage in working with LEWs, since they can offer course work that is geared to life experience and a diverse student population.[30] In a related project under the HSWI effort, the Center for the Child Care Workforce is reviewing online credit programs for child care staff as a means of addressing the challenges these workers face in child care needs and the difficulties of travel, especially for those workers from rural areas.

The issue of providing academic credits for life experience has been around for some time, as shown in the title of a 1975 article in *The Journal of Higher Education*: "Credit for Life Experience: Establishing Institutional Policy and Procedures."[31] But what is new is a major expansion of for-profit and other forms of alternative higher education. In an era when higher education often translates into higher pay, a market has grown rapidly for providing degrees from institutions that do not have well-established academic standing. The perception that LEWs might resort to higher educational options that include these less credible providers is one source of skepticism among professional groups—and other workers—about the prospects for advancement of LEWs.

In this context, there are two different types of accreditation issues:

- professional accreditation of agencies, including a review of their staffing patterns, by groups such as the Council of Social Work Education, and
- the lack of accreditation standing for some higher-education-based training and education programs that are dismissed as "pay for degree" programs.

The jury appears to be still out on alternative forms of higher education, except for the most specious programs that charge for degrees without any serious effort at oversight of curriculum quality. As one recent review of the role of distance education in higher education framed the issue,

> The basis for accreditation and credentialing has historically been seat time….An alternative to seat time is demonstrated mastery of competencies. Professionally certified tests are an example of this approach. Competency-based alternatives have only been partly successful in their challenge of seat-time credentialing, partly because of technical and quality problems with competency measures….In recent years, however, competency-based approaches are enjoying a comeback, thanks largely to growth in online and self-directed learning. For-profit outreach institutions like the University of Phoenix, once ridiculed for giving credit for "life experience," continue to gain market share against residential institutions. In spite of reliability problems, professional portfolios are increasingly used for competency demonstration and evaluation. Online learning, where seat time loses much of its meaning, continues to improve its services and learning outcomes, along with market share. These "disruptive technologies" and accompanying competency-based tools are truly disrupting the status quo.[32]

Other articles and prognoses of the e-learning field are less polite and refer to e-universities as likely to "eat the lunch" of traditional universities involved with professional education for a growing customer base, based on greater efficiencies.[33] At the federal level, Secretary of Education Spellings' pending

higher education commission report discusses “unit costs” in terms that would have horrified administrators a decade ago.[34]

Nontraditional education and nontraditional routes into health, education, and human services careers are unquestionably growing. With crowding in higher education worsening, state decreases in investment in public universities, and the arrival of the largest high school graduating classes ever during the years 2009-2012, traditional higher education is simply not equipped to handle this increasing demand for the credentials and higher pay resulting from higher education. Changes in federal legislation that make loans available for a wider range of educational institutions, including for-profits, are likely to fuel further demand.[35]

At the same time, it is not difficult to caricature “pay-for-degree” programs, some of which blatantly offer credit for life experience combined with diplomas for cash.[36] The growth rate of for-profit universities has leveled in recent years, and graduates of for-profits are still seen by many human resources professionals as tainted, compared with graduates of traditional universities. Distinctions between online, distance education, for-profit programs, and pay-for-degree programs are not widely understood, and the excesses of some of these institutions may obscure the accomplishments of the more legitimate members of these groups.

So the drive for quality and competency and concerns about efficiency and unit costs create some obvious tensions. And educating life-experienced workers to move them toward credentials and degrees will ultimately need to be done in a way that is validated by professionals and professional groups in each of the four fields. There is no magic wand of online education or virtual universities that will convert LEWs into higher-salaried human services workers—as important as it is to explore much more activist approaches to training and education using 21st century methods.

And there are clear signs that some cutting edge agencies understand the need to move in these competency-driven directions, through their own training programs as well as university-based programs. In Michigan’s Family Independence Agency,

> Competency-based behavioral interviews have replaced the previous traditional interview format. FIA first validated the competencies for Children’s Protective Services and Foster Care jobs that are associated with, and predictive of, superior job performance. They then adopted a behavioral interview approach that requires applicants to provide detailed examples of their experience in the specific competency areas. The results of these innovations were evaluated by CPS and found to have improved worker quality and diversity and reduced turnover as well.

The assessment did not, however, address life experience issues, except to the extent that they were incidental to the behavioral interview discussion of past experience. No data were available on whether those with prior work or life experience performed differently.[37]

An important exception to the dearth of sources addressing LEWs' education and training is a paper developed by Susan Dreyfus and Susan Hornung on nonprofit innovation in the child welfare workforce. They address the professional education issues more directly than most in this field:

> The schools of social work on which the field currently relies for needed child welfare professionals do not graduate sufficient numbers to meet workforce needs. In some cases, the schools produce staff who do not have a long term commitment to child welfare work. The public and private child welfare systems must continue to work with the schools of social work to produce staff with the right competencies to do the job, and also seek other innovative workforce strategies to attract people to the field….Schools of social work should recognize the applied educational value of field work and provide academic credit toward an MSW or BSW for field experience….[38]

The role and nature of client engagement

The debate in the arena of home visiting is one of the very few discussions of LEWs' roles in client engagement that was found in the literature. It is difficult—as well as controversial in some settings—to compare professionals' skills with nonprofessionals'. Yet when work in these four fields is assessed in detail, it becomes clear that some of the desired changes in clients' attitudes and behavior depend upon three closely connected factors:

- the skills of the worker,
- the readiness of the client to seek and make change, and
- the duration and intensity of the contact between client and worker.

Professionals with a sizable caseload have built-in constraints in responding to the third of these variables. Their time is limited, and if they are billing for their time, it may become unbillable after a certain point.

As noted above, LEWs come to this relationship with some advantages, in the ways that their life experience may enable engagement with clients that is deeper and more intensive than a professional who may not share those experiences. In addition, the LEW's time may be more readily available than that of a professional and may be available in a less formal and more relaxed setting, e.g., over a meal, during a drive to contact a child in a family visit, in an exchange of social contacts in a shared language, or in an outreach visit planned as in-home follow-up of clinical sessions.

In an era of accountability, professionals spend a sizable amount of time entering data about clients into automated information systems. The studies of caseload problems, especially in the child welfare field, reference this problem repeatedly. What is much less frequent is detailed analysis of the tradeoffs between client contacts and data entry. But LEWs could take up some of this slack, in one of two ways. One tendency, referenced above, is for professionals to use paraprofessionals as their data entry clerks, in response to all the pressures for feeding client information systems. A second, and contrasting use of LEWs, is for them to do follow-up visits or more frequent visits to clients, or to see clients in neutral locations for a more prolonged period of time than professional

caseworkers' schedules will allow. If LEWs have acquired screening and assessment skills, more frequent observations of clients can also help feed the demands of client outcomes systems.

Despite the importance of these functions, the few in-depth evaluations of LEWs' effectiveness only address these strengths in client engagement indirectly, and only in the home visiting arena could we find a direct comparison made with professionals' capacity to achieve client engagement.

Policy Issues

Four policy issues merit examination in this report:

- If these LEWs are at present (or may potentially become in the near future) a substantial segment of the human services workforce, how much effort should be devoted to recruiting, training, and retaining them compared with similar efforts aimed at professional workers?

- Do LEWs represent a strategy that will reduce turnover in the human services workforce, while improving or leaving quality constant?

- How will the barriers between professionals and non-professionals be reduced so that they can work together effectively?

- How can better information be collected on the value and impact of LEWs?

The report reviews each of the four fields in turn, followed by a final section summarizing the cross-cutting lessons and recommendations for future action and research.

There are several areas where the four fields overlap substantially. Youth development, for example, involves workforce development. Youth development and juvenile justice intersect at several points, and one major source identifies the ways in which the juvenile justice system can adopt a youth development, assets-based approach.[39] Child care is a critical need for parents in the child welfare system who are in substance abuse treatment programs. Where a topic could be placed in one system or another, we have tried to address the topic in the primary field and have placed a cross-reference in the linked field.

The Life-Experienced Worker as a Human Resource in Child Welfare Agencies

In the child welfare setting, life-experienced workers play multiple roles in at least three different categories. As noted in *The Unsolved Challenge of System Reform*, child welfare agencies include case aides and family support workers as part of the overall agency staffing pattern. Second, as child welfare reform models seek a more family-centered system, the role of birth, foster, and adoptive parents comes more into the spotlight, and these important kinds of life experience become more relevant as they affect the human resources available to the system. Finally, volunteers with their own life experience, including the more than 74,000 CASA volunteers, represent another form of LEW resources.[40]

One demographic point: The child welfare staff tends to be younger than other human services workforce members, as documented in a recent survey of social workers by the National Association of Social Workers.[41] This may suggest that turnover due to retirement will be less, although studies on turnover for other reasons make clear that replacement needs will continue to draw new workers into the field.

How do LEWs differ from professionals in the child welfare system? It is not only in education, credentialing, and life experience that LEWs differ from their professional counterparts. They are also

- More often part time, and thus often not eligible for worker benefits
- Considerably lower-paid
- More diverse, with wider ethnicity and language variations.[42]

LEWs in child welfare agency staffing

In a total child welfare workforce of 900,000, several recent assessments of the workforce have largely ignored the lower level of the professional/paraprofessional ranks. The federal GAO report of 2003 did not address the role of case aides, paraprofessionals, or life-experienced workers, nor have the great majority of other reports and surveys.[43] A 127-page report on retention of California social workers mentioned case aides once.[44] The APHSA report, since it had ruled out from the outset any focus on nonprofessional staff, ignored the topic completely. In contrast to some of the state surveys, it also did not discuss staffing modifications that would provide more backup support for professional workers nor any relationship with parents or clients that would affect professionals' workloads or turnover.[45]

An example of a state survey and follow-up research that included a reference to LEWs as one of several strategies for reform was the New York State report done in 2005, which included the recommendation that reforms should address the need to "employ and deploy strategically more parent aides, clerical aides, and transportation aides." This was one of ten caseload reduction strategies mentioned in the report.[46]

Numerous, excellent approaches to the issues of the child welfare workforce have ignored or mentioned only in passing the entry-level positions in that workforce and the potential for greater attention to those positions affecting turnover and overall performance.[47] In one report, published in Maine, a review of nine prior studies of child welfare retention did not mention paraprofessionals or LEWs in any explicit way, although three of the nine studies had referenced "clerical support" and "backup support" as factors affecting retention.[48] In a 1997 survey of workers in Maine, current staff made four clusters of recommendations related to the workload: "reducing the caseload, delegation of tasks and activities to case aides, increasing clerical support and reducing the paperwork." All of these—especially the second and third—would seem to relate to the roles of paraprofessional case aides.

However, this recommendation was formalized later in the report in a way that raised some new issues:

> *Provide administrative support for authorization and payments.*
> In each office establish a clerk or case aide "specialist" to facilitate and troubleshoot the authorization and payments process for caseworkers and providers. This is already being done in some offices, and it provides caseworkers with significant relief.

The report does not raise LEWs as an issue, emphasizing the need for support staff without specifying their background. But to the extent that this recommendation is carried out by assigning LEWs to these purely administrative roles, the opportunity for a closer working relationship between professionals and LEWs should be weighed. Processing payments is very different from engaging clients. Yielding to a temptation to convert LEWs into lower paid, lower-status "backup" workers could result in a failure to take advantage of many of the attributes of these workers. Yet, as the box makes clear, paraprofessionals can clearly support professionals with well-specified roles, as in this example from Wisconsin.[49]

> [In Wisconsin]…the agency found that social service paraprofessionals could handle the phones and referrals, relieving the social workers who previously covered the phone intake. Since the end of 2000, social service paraprofessionals have been responsible for speaking with callers and recording screening information on an "access sheet," which is forwarded to the unit supervisor. The access sheet uses the Wisconsin Risk Assessment Model. The intake worker receives information from the paraprofessionals who have used the risk assessment protocol. The supervisor then determines if the case is screened out or not.

Another example of the support staffing opportunity/challenge comes in Susan Robison's useful summary of child welfare workforce issues:

> Research suggests that frontline staff spend an astonishing amount of their time—between 40 and 80 percent—on documentation tasks required for state information management systems.[50] Detailed reports must be made regarding child and family visits, changes in the child's status, court-related tasks, and additional activities of daily practice. Reducing time-consuming paperwork and data entry and redirecting practitioners' time to work with children and families has a variety of potential benefits. Staff are able to do the work they love, they are more likely to stay on the job, fewer frontline staff are needed for the same

> amount of service delivery, and fewer new staff must be recruited, hired, trained, and supervised.
>
> Alabama and Oregon are among those jurisdictions where public agency caseworkers deliver their notes from field visits to support staff, who enter the information into the state data system.[51]

Again, it should be made clear that these reports have not called for LEWs, but simply for support staff. The point we are making is that the experience and background of support staff matter, in ways that have not been addressed by the great majority of the recommendations for increasing such staff.

A further comment on the surveys that focus on turnover: Surveys that identify why workers leave may not ask questions that trigger the full range of useful responses, in the same way that asking families "what they need," if the family has never heard of the earned income tax credit, is unlikely to elicit a response about the EITC. None of these surveys appear to have asked professionals whether they would benefit from closer ties to paraprofessionals or LEWs as a means of enabling them to handle caseloads better or to engage clients more effectively.

Surveys performed by organizations focused on training professionals should not be expected to focus on nonprofessionals. But it would seem reasonable to hold these reports accountable for addressing all available resources that could make retention of professionals more likely. That is what did not happen in most of these reports. The potential for nonprofessional resources to make a difference in retention was simply not examined; the focus remained almost exclusively on professionals, with passing references to their need for clerical help.

Moreover, one could argue that a profession that seeks equity as a central part of its mission should be even more concerned with nonprofessionals, especially those who make up part of the client base (or former client base) that the profession seeks to help.

An important exception to the general silence on the topic of nonprofessionals and LEWs was in the report by Dreyfus and Horning for the Alliance for Children and Families. Their 2006 report recommended wider use of older workers, referring specifically to life experience as an asset, and also called for local residents to be used more widely in family support roles in the child welfare system.

> This population of older Americans with significant professional and life experience represents a great opportunity for meeting the child welfare workforce challenge. Private agencies and the public sector at all levels need to fully examine any barriers that may impede the welcome of older people into the child welfare workforce. This may require funders to relax credentialing requirements and states to consider flexibility in their licensing requirements to give credit for other knowledge, skills, and experience. It also may necessitate creating new approaches to training, staff integration, and staff development that meet the needs of an older workforce.

> Agencies could also more fully develop and use family support staff who are culturally diverse, language-proficient, and connected to the communities they serve to work with families and support case managers. This strategy could provide employment for people in the neighborhoods being served who have *a wealth of life experience and "street smarts."*[52][emphasis added]

As mentioned in the introduction, New York City has employed retired police officers to assist child welfare staff in investigative techniques. In Chicago, working with the National Association of Social Workers Illinois Chapter, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is using retired social workers and Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) to search for relatives of children in care.[53]

The scale of LEWs in the child welfare system

It is impossible to estimate how many of the 900,000 workers in the public child welfare system are LEWs or paraprofessionals. A budget review of major jurisdictions may overstate the number, since larger cities and counties are more likely to use these positions than their smaller counterparts. In one major county, paraprofessionals made up an estimated 5 percent of the workforce of child welfare workers, which included some workers who were lower-skilled and had only high school educations, but not necessarily life experience. However, the extent to which parents make up a significant portion of the volunteer and paid work force in the foster care (not as foster parents but in support roles working with other parents) and family support segments of child welfare suggests that overall, the full-time equivalent of workers and volunteers with life experience may be as much as 100,000 workers. When one adds the professionals with life experience, who are serving as foster and adoptive parents in addition to their professional roles, as many as one-quarter of all workers may have had some form of life experience relevant to the child welfare system. But again, this is not by design, and thus the life experience of these new workers does not come into play in their recruitment and promotion.

Former foster youth

While it is a category that overlaps with youth development, which is treated separately in this report, the role of former foster youth in working with their peers and with younger foster youth is another example of life-experienced workers. Chaffee Act funding has enabled expansion of this form of LEWs, along with the emphasis in federal Child and Family Service Reviews on the outcomes of foster youth programs and the status of independent living programs. Specific programs are discussed in the youth development section.

Parents as LEWs

In the child welfare system, parents in several different categories—birth, foster, and adoptive—play roles that have major human resources implications. They act as an extension of the workforce in training other parents, providing respite care, counseling parents, and providing other child and family services that go beyond voluntarism. Parent support networks composed of parents who have been successfully reunified with their children have proven repeatedly to be a powerful supplement to what professional social workers can achieve in working with families.

In training foster parents, child welfare staff seek to provide them with skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will help them perform their vital function as temporary caretakers. In some cases, the training content is less important than the personal reinforcement and support that is provided by parents who have been through the system themselves and are in recovery from substance use disorders, mental illness, or the effects of family violence.

The potential scale of this resource can be compared with the total number of parents leaving the system each year who can be viewed as successful "graduates." The total number of parents exiting the system who are in reunification status or who have been in family maintenance but are no longer being monitored is approximately 200,000 a year.[54] If only 5 percent of these parents are viewed as appropriate parent mentors, that translates into a resource of 10,000 parents a year, which is 5.5 percent of the estimated new entrants to child welfare staffs annually.[55]

LEWs as volunteers

Not all Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) have life experience, but after working in the courts on behalf of children, CASAs gain a keen sense of what the child welfare system does and how children are affected by it. A total of 74,000 CASAs are at work in the system nationally; they may represent an important target for recruitment. There are also an unknown number of volunteers who work at the local level as caretakers for abandoned infants while they are in hospitals, support staff at children's services agencies, and retired persons who work as volunteers in children's shelters and group homes.[56]

LEWs as resources in reunification services

For a substantial number of families in the child welfare system, reunification is contingent on a set of services which are court-mandated or strongly advised as a condition of returning removed children to their birth parents. These services include treatment for substance use disorders, parent education, and domestic violence prevention. In each of these, life-experienced workers who are often former clients have proven their value as an adjunct to the professional work force. These workers at times operate within the formal child welfare system itself and at times work for external agencies that are not formally part of the child

welfare agency but provide contracted services to families referred from the child welfare system.

The substance abuse component of this resource is more fully developed, and it is to that model that we turn next.

LEWs in substance abuse treatment services

A growing number of child welfare agencies have recognized the importance of linking parents with drug and alcohol treatment and have developed stronger connections between child welfare staff and these treatment programs. But simply making a referral is often insufficient to engage a client who may be in denial about her substance use disorders or who may be reluctant to enter a program due to uncertainty about its costs, child care arrangements, or other real or perceived barriers to treatment.

Life-experienced workers who are themselves in recovery are a powerful and effective response to the challenge of client engagement in treatment programs. Several examples are well-documented, and some of these have solid evaluations of their effectiveness.

- Peer specialists in Georgia's mental health system provide direct services "designed to assist consumers in regaining control over their own lives and control over their recovery processes." Peer specialists are expected to "model competence and the possibility of recovery" and to "assist consumers in developing the perspective and skills that facilitate recovery."[57]
- Cleveland/Cuyahoga County peer mentors provide one-on-one support for people in early recovery (including adolescents in treatment) and lead recovery support and education groups, including a number of nontraditional groups, focusing on the recovery needs of abused women; the challenges of re-entry; anger management for men; and life skills and job readiness.[58]
- In Orange County, a federally funded project known as ON TIME assigned four recovery mentors to work in the dependency court and to make contact with parents as soon as they had been notified that they might lose their children and work to enroll them in treatment. The 240 women served had faster reunification rates than a comparison group and fewer positive drug tests.[59]
- In Cook County, Illinois, TASC (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities) provided intensive outreach, engagement, and case management services. Recovery coaches encouraged retention in substance abuse treatment and other related services. Parents who worked with recovery coaches entered treatment sooner, were more likely to enter treatment, were more likely to achieve reunification, and were more likely to achieve reunification sooner.[60]

- In Oregon, the Parent Mentoring Program involves parents in recovery working in support of parents in the child welfare system under a project operated by Morrison Child and Family Services.
- In Washington State, paraprofessional advocates perform home visiting tasks for high-risk substance-abusing mothers.[61] A report on the program stated

  > Paraprofessionals can be dynamic members of the community provider system when they build long-term relationships with families, firmly link clients with professionals in the community, and establish strong communication networks among service providers around individual clients.

These and other models of client engagement using LEWs have been funded by substance abuse treatment funding, by family support funding from child welfare system, and through use of Title IV-E waiver authority to hire workers who are supporting child welfare families in substance abuse settings.

Michael A. Hoge, a professor of psychology at Yale University, has studied workforce development for the Annapolis Coalition on the Behavioral Health Workforce. He points to four areas in which former clients can play particularly strong roles in prevention and treatment:

- Providing better education and support for persons in recovery about substance-use illnesses and treatment systems
- Facilitating client involvement in shared decision-making
- Expanding the range of peer and family support through avenues such as certified peer-specialist programs and supporting other efforts to increase the use of volunteers in support roles
- Working in various positions of paid employment within treatment settings
- Serving in formal roles as educators of the workforce early in the training process

Hoge also notes that consumerism as a powerful force in health and human services also has a direct effect on staffing:

> A final driver of the concern about competency is tied to the rise of consumerism in healthcare. Consumers increasingly demand meaningful participation in decisions about their care, and this dramatically shifts the traditional balance of power in the treatment relationship. More often, consumers now expect caregivers to be capable of providing information about treatment options and engaging them in collaborative decision-making in treatment planning. This unique set of practitioner competencies is seldom addressed in education and training programs (Chinman et al., 1999; Dixon et al., 2001; Young, Forquer, Tran, Starzynski, & Shatkin, 2000).[62]

While these comments address behavioral health, the degree to which both mental illness and substance use disorders affect parents and children in the child welfare system makes clear that these issues bear upon both behavioral health and child welfare clients and agencies.

LEWs in other child welfare-related services

Since child welfare is not a rigidly defined, self-contained field, but overlaps with other systems that provide services and supports needed by children and families in the CW system, the workforces in those other systems are relevant to the child welfare population and thus to potential use of LEWs. Family violence, physical and mental health, education and special education, child development, and developmental disabilities are all systems whose services are often needed by child welfare families. In addition, the welfare/TANF system is also linked to child welfare through a growing number of agencies that are building closer ties aimed at those families for whom poverty is a major factor in child neglect cases.[63]

These models include the domestic violence arena, where there has been extensive reliance on advocacy staffing, which includes women and men with life experience in family violence who function as mentors for clients currently in the system.[64] In mental health systems, progress has been made in the systems of care grant programs in tapping the skills of family support workers.[65] In child development and school readiness arenas, as we will discuss below in addressing the ECE field, parent and community aides are very common positions that bring life experience to bear on the tasks of serving children and families.

While health is not one of the four areas which the HSWI projects are emphasizing, the use of community health workers and *promotoras* is a widespread example of the LEW phenomenon. Evidence of effectiveness is cited as a result of some community health worker projects seeking to broaden lower-income families' access to health care. As summarized by the Family Strengthening Center's monograph on community health workers,

> In the landmark report, *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care*, the Institute of Medicine similarly concluded: "Community health workers offer promise as a community-based resource to increase racial and ethnic minorities' access to healthcare and to serve as a liaison between healthcare providers and the communities they serve."
>
> Studies and experience suggest CHW programs can achieve other results:
> - Increase enrollment in health insurance programs
> - Initiate service development or expansion in underserved communities
> - Increase clients' use of community resources
> - Collect data to inform policy
>
> Many programs claim CHWs are cost-effective, but relatively few have conducted rigorous analyses.[66]

Some programs have linked community health workers with family support and home visiting missions in ways that bridge the health/children and family services categories.

Barriers

LEWs face numerous barriers to their employment and wider use in human services organizations. This section will review several of these obstacles related to child welfare services.

1. The workload barrier

Some child welfare-oriented organizations have become so committed to improving the ratio of social workers to clients that their rare references to non-professional staff seem to suggest that these workers are not part of the solution to case ratios, despite the proposals cited above in some state reports that argue that case aides can help professionals significantly in handling their workloads. For example, CWLA has stated

> **Caseloads should be computed separately for each worker category.**
> …when computing any category of workers, staff who may play a role in service delivery but are not performing the specific functions of this category should not be included in the worker count. Though helpful, case aides, supervisors, and others who may assist with cases, do not perform the same functions, and including them provides a misleading caseload count.[67]

At one level, the statement is obvious: non/paraprofessionals aren't professionals and shouldn't be counted as such. But if child welfare advocates and professional organizations perceive nonprofessionals to be completely irrelevant to getting "the same functions" done and done well, they will ignore the potential for a balance between professional roles and the wide range of support that nonprofessionals with life experience can offer—in ways that clearly reduce caseload pressures. Ask a social worker with a caseload if she would like an aide who has lived in the neighborhood, speaks the language, and has dealt with the child welfare system successfully as a parent—and then ask her whether that aide would make working with a caseload easier and would make it more likely that a client could be engaged in the services she needs.

As discussed above, a profession with equity as one of its stated principles would arguably pay attention to how clients are treated when they seek to become professionals or to work with professionals in ways that help their peers. It may become necessary for social work and the child welfare field in particular to address the issues of LEWs and their status directly, in forums that are convened by professionals but willing to listen to the experiences of LEWs as a special kind of client with a special kind of human resource to offer the child welfare field.

2. The competency barrier

Equating formal higher education with competency denies the validity of life experience as a further basis for competency. The GAO child welfare report cited the 1998 CWLA study and reflected norms in the field as it made that connection:

> Fewer than 15 percent of child welfare agencies require caseworkers to hold either bachelor's or master's degrees in social work, despite several studies finding that bachelor's of social work (BSW) and master's of social work (MSW) degrees correlate with higher job performance and lower turnover rates among caseworkers[68]

The competency issues are also raised in the context of deprofessionalization of child welfare. Not only does the field perceive education as equal to competency, it also at times rejects the idea of experience as linked to competency. One 1996 assessment of the child welfare field concluded that deprofessionalization is based on an assumption of "the reorganization of jobs to reduce educational requirements, the substitution of experience for education…" and other negative trends.[69] The concern about deprofessionalization is also seen as a tactic of privatization, given recent moves in Texas, Florida, Kansas, and other states toward privatized child welfare services. This may lead to a perception of LEWs as a further move toward deprofessionalization of the child welfare workforce. One of the recent literature reviews on CWS retention issues, in fact, cited 154 documents, only one of which referred to paraprofessionals—and that one mentioned them as a potential threat to professionals because of the movement toward declassification of social work jobs that could increase use of LEWs at the expense of professional workers.[70] A recent assessment of deprofessionalization also mentioned wider use of risk assessment tools as correlated with lower-skilled workers, in which "employees without formal social work education could apply risk assessment instruments…(with) professional judgment… eliminated and social workers not needed."[71]

Typically, the case for formal education is made in contrast with lower-educated workers, rather than in comparison with life-experienced workers.

3. The pay barrier

The problem of low pay becomes a vicious circle when LEWs seek to pay for higher education that would give them the credentials needed for higher-paying jobs. Setting aside special scholarships and loan programs for such workers, along with extended-period enrollment (e.g., two-year degree programs expanded for four years or more) could help address this disparity. The larger issue is the capacity and flexibility of higher education in responding to the age-related turnover in the child welfare field. Federal IVE funding for child welfare-related education is reserved for schools of social work, which emphasize the MSW degree rather than any education linked to life experience.

Pay levels that reflect life experience, interestingly enough, are non-controversial when it comes to language ability. Thirty-eight California counties, Arizona, Colorado, and numerous other jurisdictions offer a pay differential for bilingual social workers.[72]

4. The stigma barrier

The issue of stigma is difficult to document with objective data, but interviews and informal discussions with LEWs who are currently enrolled in higher education make clear that some LEWs feel their life experience cannot be disclosed to clients, fellow students, or faculty members without the LEWs incurring prejudicial attitudes.

5. The safety barrier

Safety issues come up in each field of children and family services, but work in the child welfare arena can be quite dangerous and requires addressing issues of child safety as well as neighborhood safety. Safety issues are cited in retention studies as a frequent factor in workers' attitudes toward their jobs.[73] This may have contrasting effects on attitudes toward LEWs; on the one hand, LEWs who may be more familiar with neighborhoods and clients may reduce other workers' anxiety about safety, but the opposing concern is that LEWs will not know how to make decisions about risk and safety affecting children or may be biased toward the parents.

6. The turnover barrier

Given the great concern about retention of social workers, as mentioned above, another barrier to be reviewed is the concern that lower-paid, less system-experienced workers will have higher turnover. When focusing primarily on child welfare professionals, the conclusion of the recent report on retention issues by the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research was characteristic: "turnover is quickest for those without the professional commitment and/or at least a minimum level of education to perform job tasks."[74]

Unfortunately, this comment does not address the degree to which those characteristics also correspond to workers who have jobs with no opportunity for advancement.

7. Over-doing it

Another barrier is an over-emphasis upon the value of life experience. Like any attribute, life experience can become a way of trying to make some workers subordinate to others. In the substance abuse field, in particular, some practitioners have noted a tendency to treat recovery as a mystique, in which outsiders (the actual phrase used by some in recovery is "normies") just "can't get it," because they haven't "been there." The philosophy that you can't understand a person's problems unless you have "walked a mile in their shoes" can lead to a biased, exclusionary attitude of "you have no clue what's going here because you've never lived it." And that, of course, can become as big a barrier to the acceptance of a vital role for LEWs as the attitude that life experience by itself is useless without academic training and credentials.

Conclusion

To a significant but not well-documented degree, the child welfare field makes use of parents and volunteers with life experience as case aides, paraprofessionals, and staff. These workers are assigned tasks that range from purely clerical support to roles working directly with children and parents, including client engagement efforts that aim at better outcomes. A growing concern in the field has led to increasing emphasis upon seeking lower caseloads, but LEWs are typically not seen as part of this equation, or at most are viewed as clerical adjuncts to the system. Barriers to expanded use of LEWs include suspicion of the trend toward deprofessionalization and issues of pay and stigma attached to life experience.

In substance abuse treatment and other systems whose services are needed by children and parents in the child welfare system, LEWs have shown their ability to make a measurable difference in client engagement and client outcomes. But the assessment of the actual effects of client engagement skills has not contrasted life experience with formal education, but more often compares education with less education.

The Life-Experienced Worker as a Human Resource in Early Care and Education (ECE) Agencies[75]

The early care and education field, of the four discussed in this assessment, is almost certainly the field that currently makes widest use of LEWs. But it is also the field in which generalizations are most difficult, due to the wide range of education and experience in different segments of the field. As its name suggests, this field includes both custodial care, with some of the least professionalized and lowest paid workers in human services, as well as early childhood education, with much better-qualified workers with advanced training. When these workers are part of a public school system's preschool component, and/or when they are unionized, the pay and education requirements rise considerably in contrast with in-home and more unaffiliated center-based care.

The good news is that there is a growing recognition, based on both well-documented studies and advocacy efforts in the ECE field, that low pay and inadequate training affect the quality of ECE programs, and this has led to state and local-level investments in upgrading both pay and training.

Some of these efforts have included a focus on parents who work, in effect, as peer support workers and LEWs in their roles as aides in childcare programs. The Center for the Child Care Workforce (a program of the American Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation), in its 2002 survey of the entire field, estimated that there are 2.3 million *paid* caregivers for 0-5 year olds (with a total of 2.5 million during the year due to turnover). These are segmented into four groups:

- 550,000 (24 percent) in center-based settings, public and private
- 650,000 (28 percent) in family child care
- 804,000 (35 percent) paid relatives other than family care providers
- 298,000 (13 percent) paid non-relatives other than those working in centers or family care homes, such as nannies.

The study adds an estimate that 2.4 million additional persons provide 0-5 year olds with *unpaid* care during a given week, most of whom are unpaid relatives and the remainder are volunteers in center-based programs, primarily parent volunteers and unpaid non-relative caregivers such as church-based volunteers. Since these estimates cover only 0-5 year-olds, a substantial number of providers are excluded, including those working in afterschool programs for school-aged children—who may be considered youth development workers, thus placing them in another of the fields in this study.

What do those estimates suggest about the presence of life-experienced workers? In childcare, life experience is far more widespread because of the role of parents, grandparents, and others who have been parents, though lacking formal education or credentials. But it remains very difficult to classify these segments of the work force based on life experience, since LEWs exist in all categories, not only those that include parents and former parents.

A common pattern is parents being "charged" a non-cash fee of volunteer time in a center or home-based program, which results in parents with life experience becoming unpaid staff who are built into the operations of the program. Parents with limited training and those staff with more formal education in child development work together, but in roles in which the parents are clearly subordinate, part-time, and unsalaried—all of which may contribute to their life experience being downgraded and not recognized as an actual competency or a basis for moving toward education and professionalization.

In 1997, the Census report on ECE arrangements found that of 19 million 0-4 year olds, nearly 7 million were in some kind of formal ECE or preschool program.[76] The total population of 0-4 year olds has an estimated 23 million parents, which leads to the estimate that roughly 8.5 million parents are associated with children in some kind of formal care. This represents a potential volunteer work force that is large but very difficult to assess, since many of these parents have full-time jobs of their own.

There is also an important difference between centers and home-based care; workers in centers are younger and are more likely to have begun this work out of college or high school, while workers in homes are older, averaging in their mid-forties, and have ten years of experience.[77]

Parents with special skills

An important sub-set of children underscores a particular kind of life experience: experience dealing with children with special needs. In one of the most striking studies of younger children in recent years, the Yale Child Study Center documented that children in preschool settings are three times more likely to be expelled than children in the K-12 school system.[78] These expulsions are often due to behavioral issues that may or may not be diagnosed as special needs,[79] but the expulsions result in a very early failure message being received by these children and their parents. Coping skills learned from parenting such children are different from those acquired dealing with more conventional children and are highly valued by those care-providing agencies that seek out such parents as staff and trainers for ECE programs.

For example, in Santa Clara County, California, the Parents Helping Parents program uses a Mentor Visiting Parent (MVP) approach:

> The Mentor Visiting Parent (MVP) component of Parents Helping Parents (PHP) is the major reason for which the organization was formed. By this method, new parents (and/or old parents with a concern about their child) are matched with a veteran parent. They will have a one-to-one friendship and peer counseling relationship with someone who has been in a situation very similar to their own. Whenever possible, the client is matched with an MVP whose child has the same disability, illness or concern, and who lives nearby.[80]

A recent assessment of ECE workers in California found that a majority of workers had received some kind of training in serving special needs children.[81]

Staffing Gaps

According to the CCCW study in 2002, approximately 104,000 more individuals are needed to work in ECE centers through the course of a year, and approximately 107,000 more family ECE providers are needed on an annual basis. These 211,000 estimated workers are needed to fill in existing slots, but the even larger number of unpaid ECE workers complicate the equation considerably. And, as noted in the report, the effort to move some of these LEWs into paid work runs into the widely recognized barrier of increasing costs to parents. As the report asks, "will differential standards or costs inadvertently encourage parents to shift their children from regulated child care to relative care?"

Based on these national figures, CCCW has developed a method for estimating the total number of ECE workers in a given state, which would be helpful in determining the options for staffing. The method produced estimates of the "size and components of the child care workforce," but components is defined as each of the four types of care (centers, family care, relative and other non-relative care) for three age groups of children (infants, toddlers and preschoolers)—not the level of qualification of the workers themselves. The method does suggest that federal data undercount caregivers, however, especially relative caregivers, which may indicate that the number of unpaid LEWs is even larger than prior estimates.

Pay Gaps

The low pay scales in ECE have received national and state-level attention for several years, with surveys documenting that ECE is one of the lowest-paying jobs among all the health, human services, and education fields. As summarized by the Mailman Foundation, which has made a series of grants to organizations addressing the pay and quality of the ECE workforce,

- There isn't enough money in the system. Parents are already paying more than they can afford.
- "Women's work" is historically undervalued and underpaid.
- Because child care is seen, and often undertaken, as a "labor of love," we haven't been willing to provide professional compensation.
- The belief that "families should take care of their own" undermines efforts to make children and their early education a public responsibility.
- We are caught between a widespread belief that parents should be the ones to care for their young children and the reality that the vast majority of parents of young children are working.
- Most child care takes place outside of a system that can standardize compensation and link it to qualifications.
- There is a growing K-12 teacher shortage, which is expected to worsen before it improves. Already, the most qualified early childhood teachers are being "cherry-picked" to fill higher paying jobs as primary grade teachers. At the same time, demand for child care teachers continues to rise.
- Because child care doesn't pay a "living wage," workers are discouraged from entering the field. Many welfare-to-work programs refuse to train their clients for child care.[82]

Data on pay is complicated by the categories of workers used by the BLS, which collects early care and education workforce data through numerous surveys in addition to the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Survey, and uses such occupational titles for child care center employees as aides, child care assistants, day care assistants, teacher assistants, child care attendants, day care attendants, and early childhood teacher assistants. This blurs the educational and custodial responsibilities of child care workers: "Child care workers" [513,000] (which excludes "teacher assistants") were making an average of $8.37/hour in 2003, while "preschool teachers" [355,000] were making $10.67.[83,84] These totals exclude most home-based workers.

Barriers

As in child welfare and other professional arenas, a strong perception that professionalization should be equated with quality staffing leads to an under-valuing of LEWs, especially parent aides or volunteers without formal education or credentials. Based on written materials from this field, parents' life experience and cultural competency are not valued as assets in most of the assessments of the quality of the ECE workforce, since those assessments focus almost entirely on paid staff. That is not to say that parents' role in ECE is not greatly appreciated, but when the discussion shifts to links between pay and quality, life experience is rarely included in the equation. As noted below, Head Start is an important exception to this general trend.

Examples of LEWs in ECE

In Santa Cruz County, California, two types of parent aides are described as part of the staffing pattern of local centers:

> **Child Care Aides:**
> The aides are responsible for the physical and emotional care of the infants and toddlers. They model good parenting practices and assist in supervising students in the Center, child care aides are also responsible for coordinating and assisting in housekeeping tasks of the center.
> **Teen Parent Aides:**
> The teen parents assigned to the Center are responsible for the physical and emotional care of all the infants and toddlers, not just their own. They are also responsible for assisting in the housekeeping tasks of the Center. They will be assigned projects during the semester that will help them learn more about parenting and being on their own.[85]

In the national Head Start program, the extensive use of aides and the community-based nature of the program make this early childhood arena one of the most hospitable to LEWs. As described in the Head Start publication on career development, upward mobility is a goal of the program, and personnel practices are expected to reflect that goal:

> A career ladder or lattice can be a useful tool for employees to see the possible career options available to them within Head Start. The first step is to develop and graphically portray all of the positions employees might seek in career advancement. This portrayal should include clear, brief descriptions of the roles, major job functions, and realistic qualifications.

> Employees find it helpful when positions are shown in ladders up and down the organizational lines. For example, the ladder can depict career moves a Head Start employee can make from a teacher assistant's job to classroom teacher to lead teacher in a center to teacher/mentor. These levels and career moves are most often based on the experience and knowledge needed to be successful. Employees also gain an understanding of the career opportunities open to them in a lateral direction, across specialty lines. For example, an employee can see what skills and knowledge are needed to move from a beginning job as a nutrition aide to a job as a teacher aide in a classroom to a job as a family advocate.[86]

This tone of active encouragement of LEWs moving toward professionalization does not seem to be as prevalent throughout early childhood care and education as it is in Head Start. The orientation to parents and aides becoming professionals is unmistakable in the Head Start policy manual (Section 1304.52):

> Current and former Early Head Start and Head Start parents must receive preference for employment vacancies for which they are qualified…. Grantee and delegate agencies must establish and implement a structured approach to staff training and development, attaching academic credit whenever possible. This system should be designed to help build relationships among staff and to assist staff in acquiring or increasing the knowledge and skills needed to fulfill their job responsibilities….[87]

Legislation requiring that at least half of classroom teachers have two-year, four-year, or master's–level degrees was effective as of 2003; the extent to which aides were also a focus of the requirement is unclear. In 2001, Head Start developed a Family Worker Training and Credentialing Initiative, with the goal of improving the effectiveness, quality, and outcomes of more than 25,000 Family Workers employed by local Head Start programs.[88]

In a sister project under the overall HSWI, the Child Care Services Association manages the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Technical Assistance and Quality Assurance Center. Operating in 23 states, T.E.A.C.H. is an umbrella for a variety of scholarships that allow a diverse population working in the field to receive a college education. The Center's Child Care WAGE$ Project, operating in five states, provides graduated salary supplements to early childhood workers based on educational achievement. Education is the only variable that is being assessed in these evaluations; prior life experience is not weighted or tracked.

In several states, efforts to strengthen early teacher education have emphasized competencies needed for preschool teachers. New Mexico, in particular, has devoted considerable time to a multi-year process that examined non-public school teaching competencies and proposed a "career lattice" that rewarded teachers as they moved from sub-AA degree levels requiring only 45 hours of training, up to full B.A.-requiring levels of career development. Core content required for early childhood teaching has been specified, and the competencies that are required to teach that content are set forth in detail.[89]

Conclusion

The ECE field has paid more attention to the potential of LEWs because parents make up such a vital part of the paid and volunteer work force and because there has been growing awareness that quality care requires less turnover and greater professionalization.

The Life-Experienced Worker as a Human Resource in Youth Development Agencies

Youth development, as defined by the Forum for Youth Investment, is an on-going process in which young people are engaged in building skills, attitudes, knowledge, and experience that prepare them for the present and future. Youth development should be viewed as a process in which all youth are engaged and all youth are invested. The National Research Council defines youth development as the acquisition of attitudes, competencies, values, and social skills that will carry youth forward into successful adulthood. [90]

The original HSWI report estimated that there were two million youth workers (and another two million part-time youth workers).[91] The report defined a youth worker as

> someone engaged in promoting the overall development of school-age children and youth ages 5–18 in any capacity other than teaching in public or private educational institutions during the regular school day, early child care, and social work/social services. (This is a definition developed by the Academy for Educational Development's Center for Youth Development and Policy Research with a coalition of youth development agencies.) Examples of youth workers are counselors, coaches, recreation workers, and school-based staff who work with youth on a day-to-day basis during nonschool hours and also include what the Department of Labor (DOL) tracks as "activity specialists" who are school affiliated staff such as yearbook and honor society advisors, and parks and recreation staff and coaches.[92]

The paper further notes:

> Youth services is the least documented, least understood, and probably the most varied field we studied. There is no national data set on youth workers, or on youth-serving programs. While several large, national youth-serving organizations collect data on their own programs, much of the data are unreliable and often inaccurate. Understanding this field better is made more complicated by substantial mistrust among agencies about sharing program data.

Thus there is not a lot of information about youth development workers in general or on the narrower topic of the prevalence of life-experienced workers in this broad field. The Indiana Youth Group has published a working guide specific to HIV youth programs, and the National 4-H Council and its collaborators have developed a wider view of the future of youth workers.[93]

The Forum for Youth Investment has recently, as part of the HSWI project, authored a report on youth development workers that builds on a 2004 conference, a survey of more than 1,000 youth workers, and interviews and site visits to several exemplary training projects.[94] In this assessment, experience was discussed as one of five characteristics of workers (the others are age, gender, race/ethnicity, and education) that make up some of the inputs affecting the ultimate impact of youth workers. Workers' overall experience was summed up: "Most of those surveyed come to youth work from related fields. Two-thirds

have a relevant credential." The study added, "…organizations, intentionally or not, are successfully recruiting staff who share some important characteristics with the young people they serve."

On the issue of experience, the study concluded:

> Two-thirds of the respondents have specific credentials or certificates related to their work: 21 percent have been trained in the Advancing Youth Development curriculum; 15 percent have a teaching certificate; and a combined 20 percent have either a school-age care certificate, a youth work certificate, or a youth development associate's degree. A full third, however, have no relevant certificate or credential…. Almost eight in 10 have attended training in the last six months, nine in 10 in the last year. Only five percent report never having attended training. Eighty-five percent of workers surveyed report that their organization has identified specific staff competencies or skills necessary to work with youth.

A tension is evident in the youth development field, in which the drive for greater professionalization and the recognition that peer workers are effective are both important human resources values. A participant in a recent conference on the future of youth workers captured this sentiment well in saying, "How do we get past the public perception that anyone can do this work? We will always be struggling, if people cannot get past this perception. We need to recognize the professionalism of our youth workers."[95]

But this tension may also provide the basis for a blend of professionalization and recognition of the value of LEWs. In interviews conducted prior to the conference on youth workers, feedback suggested that a blend of "in-service and training opportunities, formal and informal mentoring, and networking among peers" was needed.[96] Building on the assets of leadership in the youth development field and the funding investments made by several national organizations, the youth development field may have ripened to a point where it may have a greater potential for combining professionalization and upward mobility for LEWs than any of the other fields. As a recent summary of the field's human resources challenges stated, the need is for

- Competencies identified for all youth workers that are clearly communicated in order to counter the perception that youth work is an unskilled profession;
- Multiple pathways into the field of youth work, such as internships and mentoring;
- Career paths within jobs (differentiated levels of direct service work), between jobs (clearer paths between direct service and management), and across organizations (better definitions of what a youth work career might look like across organizations).[97]

These goals for the field address both the potential for LEWs and the need for professionalization.

The use of LEWs in youth development

In many ways, the field of youth development is more hospitable to the concept of LEWs, since it starts from a position of youth as assets. From the outset, the field focuses on the positive results that young people seek and can achieve. Those working in this field seek explicitly to change the subject in addressing the needs of youth from youth with problems to youth as resources. A major emphasis in this shift is on engaging the community in supporting and guiding youth as they develop into productive citizens. Youth development workers engage adolescents in rethinking their position in their community, in their own personal views of how they fit into the world, and the contributions they can make.

Thus LEWs who are themselves either youth or young adults work in this field as peers, mentors, and at times as former clients. LEWs' roles, titles and job scope range in variety. LEWs take on the roles and jobs of health educator, case manager, group leader, facilitator of group process, and as outreach workers to disengaged youth. LEWs may be referred to as peer advocate, peer leader, youth-to-youth peer worker, outreach worker, advocate, community health worker, and peer worker. There is no "uniformly" accepted definition of "peer" in the workplace. For the purpose of this paper, peer staff is defined as any young person who works with other young people in a paid or structured volunteer assignment and who shares the same fundamental experiences with the youth they are helping.

Benefits of LEW youth workers

Peer staff are quickly becoming more recognized in the youth development service delivery system, especially in work with at-risk youth. Peer staff experiences range from personal experience with substance abuse, foster care, or gang involvement, to those who just have a general interest in young people. Peer staff can have a positive effect on the young clients they work with through their ability to establish strong communication links that help to establish trust and allow for opportunities to encourage positive behavioral change. An LEW in a peer staff role who has made the transition from client to provider is able to offer practical advice and strategies that contributed to her/his success, which can carry more weight due to LEWs' experience and empathy.

LEWs' experience lies in "having walked in the shoes" of their clients, sharing similar experiences. Part of their talent is the ability to challenge clients on their behavior, holding the mirror to them when they need it most. Their skills include empowering their clients to make the desired changes they are seeking. They serve as an encouragement, conveying a message "If I can do it, anyone can." Their empathy and support is an obvious asset for a client in treatment because of their first hand experience. And, as noted in the earlier review of theoretical benefits for life-experience, citing the work of Frank Reissman and others on peer helpers, being a peer/mentor is also important to the development of the youth doing the mentoring.

Groups promoting positive youth development have also focused on the juvenile justice system, encouraging the system to integrate positive youth development strategies to meet justice goals and produce a "treatment" result.[98] Less attention is paid to juvenile

offenders who commit nonviolent or less serious offenses and to those who commit crimes for heightened social status, fear, poverty, negative social peers, defiance or thrill seeking. Several studies[99] indicate that pro-social behavior can be fostered through connections among adults and peers across social worlds, including schools, workplaces and communities. Youth who have successfully moved out of the juvenile justice system could ultimately serve as LEWs in mentor or youth development worker capacities.

For disconnected youth, LEWs may be even more important than for other youth who are more fully integrated into the life of their community and have more assets. Youth workers who share little in common with disconnected youth may have a difficult time understanding the barriers facing these youth, who may have learning disabilities, parenting responsibilities, few job prospects, or criminal records. While it is certain to be challenging to recruit and train youth who may have passed through their own spells of disconnected lifestyles, their greater understanding of the youth they seek to help may make the effort worthwhile.

Training and Educational Models

In May 2001, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) awarded a set of Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship Implementation Grants. The initiative targeted youth workers, defined as those professionals who work or will work as frontline staff in programs delivering services to youth. The goals of these programs were (1) to strengthen the field of work by providing training, mentoring, and a career path for new workers and improving retention in the field, and (2) to upgrade youth workers' skills by increasing the number of youth workers who receive extensive training, in hopes of helping to retain such staff. Thirteen organizations received $1.5 million in allocations.[100]

In 2004, the Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies evaluated the success of these programs.[101] While many of the programs were still at early stages, others had fully integrated programs where youth workers had completed their apprenticeships. There was consensus that the YDPA model worked to enhance the skills and employability of staff while also improving the quality of youth services delivered. Grant recipients reported that more resources were directed toward staff training and development, while program directors were more aware of the importance of standardizing youth worker skills and competencies in the workforce.

There are also several new programs offering various approaches to supporting LEWs in acquiring formal education in the youth development field, including the following:

- Penn Valley Community College[102] in Kansas City offers a youth development certificate program that requires 12 hours of college credit; the college has partnered with YouthNet[103] to help develop and teach the courses to draw upon its first-hand knowledge and experience relevant to the field.
- The Indiana Youth Development Credential[104] offered through Ivy Tech Community College is considered a professional recognition for those who have completed coursework and demonstrated competence at the entry level.
- The American Humanics' bachelor degree certification works in partnership with universities and colleges to establish a certification process in nonprofit

management that is incorporated into undergraduate training. Courses include experiential education and competency acquisition.[105]

- The Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance [106] is a cadre of human service colleges at 10 universities providing a multi-institutional post-baccalaureate degree program in youth development which offers a thirty-six credit master's program, as well as specialist certificates in youth development or youth program management and evaluation. Kentucky's State Department of Juvenile Justice and others have partnered with local colleges and universities to help professionalize the field through staff development and work credit.[107] This process is necessary for the field to grow as well as to offer opportunities for upward mobility for those working in the field, credentialed or not.
- Kentucky's Youth Workers' job specifications at levels I, II , and III, both in juvenile justice and human services, minimally require a high school diploma and two to three years experience in the youth development field. Education requirements may be substituted by direct field work. The Youth Worker Supervisor and Youth Worker Program Supervisor both require a bachelor's degree with two to three years experience. Extra training can be substituted for experience requested.
- There are several national initiatives including BEST and the Department of Labor Apprenticeship Programs that are mentioned in this paper. Florida, Massachusetts, Missouri, and New York all have state initiatives in place.

The National BEST (Best Exemplary Systems for Training youth workers[108]) Initiative provides technical assistance, training, and networking to community-based systems, as they work to strengthen their capacity to train youth workers in the concepts of youth development. The three main goals of the National BEST Initiative are to:

- Strengthen and develop local infrastructures for delivering youth worker training grounded in youth development principles,
- Develop and support a national network of local community-based youth worker training efforts so that they share resources, identify strategies, and build capacities of youth workers, and
- Identify local communities with a demonstrated interest in developing a system to train youth workers not yet part of this initiative and to support them as they develop plans to build infrastructures to train youth workers.

In Boston, a BEST certificate of completion is accepted as credit at Springfield College of Human Services and is worth six undergraduate credits or one graduate credit at the College of Public and Community Services at the University of Massachusetts/Boston.[109]

Challenges in the Youth Development Workforce

The challenges include

- Perceptions by other workers that LEWs in youth development are inadequately prepared or allow their experience as consumers to affect their work with clients
- Poor pay and requirements for training and credentials to improve LEWs' salaries

- The time costs of supervision and mentoring LEWs
- Barriers based on differences in age, culture, lifestyle, and on structural racism
- Unclear, poorly defined competencies

Because youth development is a relatively new field, it seeks professionalization in ways that create some tension with the LEW movement. These tensions are fueled when the workforce becomes more competitive for advancement and financial compensation. LEWs are perceived as having proven skills and talents in working with young people, but as lacking formal education as former consumers who are now staff, at times in the same organization that served them as clients. Former clients turned staff may also need extra support from their supervisors, since some of their own experiences and feelings may be triggered by their clients' experiences.

At the same time, there are also college-educated direct service providers without much experience, personal or otherwise, in the field. They may have little in common with clients except age or gender. They may not gain trust from their clients, especially if confronted with issues that may be far from their own personal experiences.

The tradeoffs among credentials, education, experience, and pay are further challenges to a clearer role for LEWs in youth work. Dr. Mark Kreuger, professor and director of the Youth Work Learning Center at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, has 35 years experience in the youth development field, eleven of which he spent as a youth worker. Kreuger says, "I believe that knowledge and education are keys to effective youth work practice." He adds, "Youth workers are underpaid and under-prepared and often still receive little supervision and support in their day-to-day work. Standards for the work are relatively low, and too many people are being recruited to do the work who do not belong in the field. Turnover and incompetence remain high. At our center we have trained over 15,000 youth workers over the years, and we have witnessed much of this firsthand."

As reported in *Youth Today*, Geoffrey Canada, CEO of the Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families in Harlem, has commented on the tensions between degreed and non-degreed youth workers.

Canada believes "there shouldn't be too much of one at the exclusion of the other. All of our under-25 employees must be pursuing a GED or college or university credits. We steer them to scholarships, loans and grants and adjust their hours to accommodate their studies. And we do it for two reasons: One, it helps develop the field, and two, it serves employees well by letting them know they're not trapped in one position."

Canada's agency has formed a partnership with the College of New Rochelle whereby youth workers can further their careers by amassing credits toward degrees. "You don't have to have a degree to be talented, but by pursuing it, you show engagement in the field," he says, "and upon attainment of the degree, the pay increases."

When peer LEWs are added to the workforce, youth making the transition from client to staff will undoubtedly need guidance and tutelage from senior staff. The transitional process can be a difficult one as the client turned staff will need to engage in different processes, and these youth workers may need more support than their non-LEW counterparts in adjusting to their position. It is helpful if the agency has adult staff that act as youth advocates, mentors, and coaches.

Several additional roadblocks exist that affect the success of LEWs in the youth worker field. Resentment of LEWs by adult staff often occurs because of the time intensive needs of peer workers. There may be no incentive or recognition for the adult worker

who takes on mentoring, supporting, or coaching the youth peer worker. Issues of power between adult and peer youth workers may arise as the peer youth workers become more acclimated to their new role. Client engagement may contribute to the power struggle between the adult and peer LEW if the peer LEW is perceived to be better at establishing initial trust. Perceptions of professionalism come into play because of ageism, structural racism, different lifestyles, language and slang usage, and the lack of professional training and possibly formal education. These perceptions contribute to how successful the integration of such workers will be.

> "Experience will always be the foundation, but we grow from there. We take our experiences with us, but move forward and give back differently. Be cautious of how we use past clients as spokespersons. We don't want to abuse their experience. We need to encourage them to have goals. It's our job to make sure they do this."
>
> Dorothy Ansell,
> National Resource Center
> for Youth Services

Structural racism, as defined by the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, is a system for allocating social privileges.[110] Racism is institutionally grounded and reinforced in American society in ways that people aren't aware of or willing to acknowledge. Because of disproportionate inclusion of youth of color in youth development systems in some parts of the nation, the youth development system must at times challenge institutional racism in areas where LEWs may have personally experienced racism but may be uncomfortable raising or pursuing these issues without the support of more senior professionals or mentors. For nonwhites without formal education or for a former consumer without formal education, this practice may create even fewer opportunities for upward mobility on the career ladder. Discriminatory treatment, unfair practices, and inequitable opportunities may be produced and perpetrated by institutions themselves and encouraged by those who refuse to acknowledge that prejudice and discrimination exist.

Typecasting, or stereotyping, is another barrier that can affect LEWs, who can be seen as having relevant experience to share, but not professional skills. They may be overlooked for training or other staff development opportunities because they are seen as already having special skills.

The competencies for youth development workers are often vaguely defined. Core competencies are based on the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes of youth development workers. They are the "demonstrated capacities" that allow a youth development worker to be a resource to youth, organizations, and communities.[111] Even youth workers with formal education do not always have specific training in the field as there are few degree programs that cater to youth development specifically, and one report criticized these programs as emphasizing management of youth programs more than the skills of working directly with youth.[112] The National Youth Development Learning Network[113] says that increasingly colleges and universities are beginning to offer formal coursework for those in the field of youth development, but reports that these degree programs face the challenge of bridging between academic programs that ensure the credibility and professionalism of the field with the credibility and experience gained from years in the field or life experience.

The promotion of aides to full-time status is encouragement to staff willing to go to school or specialized training. Employers who make staff development opportunities

available to all staff, create mentoring systems, and offer financial incentives may be able to retain the multiple levels of youth development workers they employ. Dorothy Ansell, from the National Resource Center for Youth Services,[114] says, "Youth have a desire to give back to the system." She cautions practitioners to avoid taking advantage of their LEWs' stories. Sometimes the work provides instant gratification and glory that results in LEWs failing to pursue higher education or other goals.

Benefits of the LEW Youth Worker

In 1993, the Health Resources and Services Administration Special Projects of National Significance Program funded 10 projects focusing on youth HIV/AIDS services. Nine of those projects utilized peer youth workers to provide outreach and retain youth in care.

According to the Peer Development Guide[115] developed by The Measurement Group, peer youth workers/LEWs often serve as mentors and encourage pro-social behavior in young clients. Youth involvement is strongly connected to clients' ability to utilize care. There is also a perception by young people that their peers are safer and more understanding of their personal issues. Youth workers bring a unique lens to the work that can be used to influence the development of programs and materials aimed at youth in care. The LEW can also share personal and relevant experience that clients can relate to. Client/staff trust can sometimes be more easily attained due to common ground and the workers' ability to communicate their own life experiences. LEWs may be able to inspire, connect on a different level, and help clients set realistic goals by sharing their own insights on what has worked for them. LEWs who have similar experiences to their clients can also share information about the challenges in recovery related to daily life and how to access resources and support.

Model Projects of LEWs in YD roles

- Bay Area Young Positives, San Francisco, CA: Member Advocates (peer case managers) provide direct services to clients. Founded in 1990 as a support group for young people living with HIV/AIDS. Members of this group noticed there were limited resources for young people with HIV/AIDS and decided to form an agency. In 1993, the agency got its 501c3 status and the following year received a federal grant and opened up as the first peer-run agency in the world for young people with HIV/AIDS.

- Children's Hospital of Boston/Boston HAPPENS, Boston, MA: Youth peer workers are involved in the program as peer educators, youth coordinators, and youth advisory members. Youth and young adult staff members are responsible for development and direct services. Boston HAPPENS provides HIV prevention, testing, care, and support to adolescent and young adults ages 12-24.

- Health Initiatives for Youth (HIFY), San Francisco, CA: Young adult staff have the prime responsibility for the development and delivery of all program services. The youth workers are responsible for carrying out clinical responsibilities under the supervision of non-peer staff but have a lot of autonomy and take part in the strategic planning for services.[116] HIFY was founded in 1992 by a team of health

care and youth service professionals in response to the immediate need for HIV prevention, treatment, and care for young people in San Francisco. HIFY's mission is to improve the health and well-being of young people by empowering them through education, advocacy and leadership opportunities.

- Walden House, San Francisco, CA: Young Adult HIV (YAH) Project[117] utilizes peer youth workers to provide individualized counseling and support to young people living with HIV. Youth workers are trained to perform risk assessment and pre and post counseling. Walden House has noted that since the hiring of peer workers to facilitate the testing process they have noticed a greater demand for testing as well as less stigma associated with HIV and testing within the adolescent community. Peer workers are also responsible for helping young clients create resumes and search for jobs. The support of peer workers helps clients develop life skills and helps ease the process of reentry into society. This project has served 512 high-risk young people (ages 13-25 years), 101 of them living with HIV/AIDS. The YAH project offers treatment services and a coordinated support system, as well as behavioral health care, to adolescents and young adults who are in need of HIV/AIDS services; all clients suffer from multiple diagnoses. The emphasis is on providing a comprehensive continuum of services, with the case manager and peer staff coordinating services to try to meet the diverse needs of each client. The complexity and intensity of the target population's needs challenge traditional models of care. This project provided almost four hours daily of cost-effective rehabilitation programming to each client, increased participants' self-reported measures of well-being, and increased staff's ability to deal with HIV issues.

- YouthCare, Seattle, WA: Prevention, Intervention and Education Project (Project PIE).[118] YouthCare has an eight-year history of hiring peer interns.[119] Street outreach staff are under the age of 25. Two peer counselors work in concert with a non-peer staff member to provide HIV services. Some staff are former homeless individuals, are recovering, and have suffered abuse and find YouthCare a place where they connect to clients and also give back to the system. For all peer positions, an intern model is utilized. YouthCare found that a time-limited internship would allow more youth to be hired over time. This practice also made it easier to hire past interns into professional positions as they became available and helped to reduce potential obstacles for young people who have been involved in juvenile justice or foster care systems. Mike Kabisch, program director, says the transition of clients to staff is important to the work of youth care, but needs to be done carefully. When just out of care, peers are not ready for a job, and as a result clients cannot apply for staff positions for three years from their last time as a client. There is a high level of encouragement to go to school. Ninety to ninety-five percent of staff at YouthCare have at minimum a Bachelor's degree, and Kabisch says he's told youth clients to "go to school, and when you come back, we'll find a place for you."

Conclusion

Peer youth workers or LEWs must be given defined roles and responsibilities that make clear how they will participate in the organization. If they are moving from being consumers to staff within the same agency, they may require practical and emotional support as they make the transition, so that they can use their experiences in positive and healthy ways when working with clients. Staff development opportunities in the area of program development as well as personal skill development need to be accessible to LEW in youth development.

The Life-Experienced Worker as a Human Resource in the Juvenile Justice Field

The original HSWI report says that there are approximately 300,000 juvenile justice workers in the country with an estimated average wage of $30,000 per year. Juvenile justice workers include Deputy Probation Officers (DPOs), Probation officers (POs) juvenile justice managers, probation workers and assistants, juvenile counselors in juvenile hall, youth supervisors, "specialists," detention officers, juvenile intake probation officers, school resource officers assigned to probation roles, and youth care workers in private or state-run juvenile detention centers.

This section will explore the integration of LEWs in the juvenile justice system and the benefits and challenges facing the juvenile justice system as it considers expanding the use of LEWs.

At the Intersection of Youth Development and Juvenile Justice

Chapin Hall's recent monograph on juvenile justice options and other policy reviews have asked an important question: Can the insights of positive youth development be applied in the juvenile justice system? Traditional juvenile justice intervention models focus on individual and family counseling, with some elements of group therapy and remedial education. If juvenile justice integrated positive youth development strategies, other dimensions would be added, including peer counseling, leadership development, and family living skills. Cross-age tutoring between juvenile offenders and younger children and training on decision-making skills could also be addressed.[120] Thus the policy directions in juvenile justice raise the possibility that LEWs in both areas could play overlapping or even combined roles in a single staff position.

Models

In Racine, WI, the Gang/Crime Diversion Task Force (G/CDTF)[121] was created by two police officers who thought to partner with ex-offenders who wanted to give back to the community. They felt working in collaboration would save children by bringing them out of gangs and diverting them from criminal behaviors. The program director of G/CDTF, Maurice Horton, is an ex-offender who was working as a truancy abatement coordinator for Safe Haven of Racine, when he volunteered for the program. Horton was instrumental in creating a strong collaboration between the Racine police department and Safe Haven of Racine. The Task Force leadership agreed to ex-offenders in their department as part of the Task Force. In addition to Horton, ten former felons have been hired as G/CDTF members, in roles that include street outreach and direct work with youth in trouble. For these hires, there has been no re-entry into prison.

The Task Force relies heavily on youth involvement in program design and implementation. The youth board is comprised of participating students who have consistent attendance, noted improvement, and leadership within group sessions. The youth are responsible for facilitating classes and keeping other participants in a mode of

accountability. G/CDTF uses former gang members, drug dealers, peers and professionals to provide balanced intervention.

Stories like Maurice Horton's seem rare. There is little written material on the integration of ex-offenders working within juvenile justice systems. That is not, however, to say that LEWs are not present in the juvenile justice system. In discussing home detention programs as a model of juvenile justice reforms, a recent OJJDP publication noted:

> Many, but not all, home detention programs use paraprofessional outreach workers in lieu of probation officers to both mentor and supervise youth. Home detention provides considerable cost savings compared with secure and nonsecure placements.[122]

The same publication noted further:

> Treatment foster care (TFC) programs use adult mentors and nondelinquent peers to isolate delinquent youth from the negative influences of criminally involved peers. Youth receive treatment and intensive supervision at home, in school, and in the community.[123]

In San Francisco's Detention Diversion Advocacy Program (DDAP), an intensive supervision program in which offenders meet with case managers at least three times a week, evaluators have suggested the following reasons for the program's success:

> …small caseloads, caseworkers' freedom from bureaucratic restrictions of the juvenile justice system, the similar backgrounds of DDAP caseworkers and clients, and an emphasis on rehabilitative services coupled with specific goals to track clients' progress.[124]

Cook County has prioritized the hiring of former probationers as a way to better connect with the youth that the department serves. To reach this goal, the department created an initiative called Project Lifeline. The project identifies probationers with promise and provides scholarships for college and vocational training. Participants are given internship opportunities in the probation department, and those who graduate from the program are given special consideration when applying for positions as probation officers. According to Probation Director Mike Rohan, about fifty youth have graduated, and seven have gone on to become probation officers. When positions are available, the department aims to hire one to two graduates per year.

Barriers

1. Caseloads

A classic statement of the perceived connection between caseload, worker quality, and outcomes was included in a recent report on juvenile justice system functioning:

> The analyses showed that lower caseloads and lower intake workloads for officers were related to lower recidivism rates. Thus, the agency's ability to hire more officers was related to youth outcomes. Channeling funds into hiring and

> retaining qualified officers is paramount because this in turn will reduce caseload and workload.

Immediately thereafter, the report went on to say,

> A heavy workload, however, is related to stress and burnout and affects the quality of services provided to children and families. The literature also reveals that more and more administrative duties are being expected of human service workers, and Texas probation officers are no exception. In Texas probation agencies, officers stated that client contact is sacrificed in order to fulfill administrative requirements. With increased administrative duties, there is a danger of creating a disconnect between the actual nature of human service work and the expectations of human service workers to serve the public.[125]

But there was no reference to the possibility that some form of worker other than those now in place could alleviate any of these problems. It was as though the system needed to change, but the workers should remain the same, other than having more of them.

Another recent review of the views of frontline juvenile justice workers noted that some studies had suggested placing social work students in juvenile justice offices to provide additional support; there was no discussion of life-experienced workers playing such a role, however.[126]

2. Workers' Pay Issues

In September 2005, hundreds of Los Angeles deputy probation officers and other county employees walked off their jobs due to long time contract disputes with the county. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees said insufficient staffing and underpaid overtime have created a dangerous work environment for workers in juvenile halls and camps. DPO's are being paid to work 40 hours, but work 50 or more with little compensation.[127]

In February 2004, in Maryland, troubled state juvenile detention centers are described as being left to a small and unskilled workforce. The state of Maryland pays the youth supervisors at these detention centers little more than cafeteria workers and less than their counterparts in surrounding states. Maryland's starting salaries were approximately $23,700 for youth supervisors and $26,900 juvenile counselors. This rate was 8-34 percent lower than surrounding states' wages.[128]

Over time, it seems possible that these issues of professionals' pay levels could affect consideration of expanded use of paraprofessionals without the credentials of existing professionals. If workers able to handle client contact and/or administrative duties prove to be available as older workers retire and burn out, the model of always replacing a professional with a professional may come under increased scrutiny. Here, as in child welfare, expanding privatization is also an option, as private firms see the scale of juvenile corrections as a tempting industry to enter and do so based on a business model that uses lower-paid staff.[129]

3. Lack of a trained, skilled workforce

Maryland had nearly 1,000 youth supervisors and juvenile counselors and a 30 percent annual attrition rate for entry level workers.[130] Workers allege that there are hazardous working conditions for staff and unsafe centers for the juveniles. There is minimal training for workers. In Maryland, workers undergo 160 hours of entry-level training in criminal justice, human development, security procedures, and other topics. Such workers need only have a high school diploma or GED and are used to both guard and mentor youth. So these are low-skilled workers, but the extent to which they have relevant life experience with youth or youthful offenders is not clear.

Juvenile justice workers are often given a variety of tasks and responsibilities, but innovative and broad-based training does not seem to be available. Nor are hiring practices in place that seek an expanded role for LEWs in the juvenile justice field.

4. Ex-offender status as a barrier to employment

In Florida, the State Department of Juvenile Justice has yet to enforce the state's long-time open records law, which could help stop the rehiring of staff with a history of violence or misconduct. Florida's law allows anyone to see job applications and personnel records of public employees. The state's contracts with its juvenile justice operators require them to follow this law, but contractors are reluctant to share personnel information even with their counterparts.[131] A review found that many of those fired from youth-related jobs were rehired to work with teens in other facilities simply because there was no knowledge of prior employment history.[132]

Florida's juvenile justice centers are prohibited from hiring felons within seven years of their convictions. At least 138 juvenile justice workers in this state had been arrested and been punished for felony charges.[133]

The 2003 study *Employer Demand for Ex-Offenders: Recent Evidence from LA* reported:

> Job candidates with criminal pasts are less likely to be called back after a job interview, according to a study by a sociologist at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill. While 34 percent of whites without a criminal record received a call back, just 17 percent of whites with a criminal record were asked to come back. Blacks fared even worse: Just 5 percent of black applicants with criminal records got called back.
>
> More than 40 percent of employers would probably or definitely be unwilling to hire an applicant with a criminal record, according to a 2001 survey of 619 organizations in Los Angeles. More than a third said their response would depend on the applicant's crime.[134]

Employers are carrying out background checks because qualms stemming from the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks have companies more wary about the people they're hiring. About 15 percent of employers reported that background checks on employees are more comprehensive now than before the Sept. 11 attacks, according to a 2002 online poll by the Society for Human Resource Management.

LEWs of Color

Minority youth are overrepresented in residential placement facilities for all offense categories. African American youth represent the largest racial/ethnic proportion of youth held behind locked doors. Eighteen states reported overrepresentation of minorities among youth transferred to criminal court.[135] These issues of disproportionate incarceration have been addressed in looking at overall work force changes in juvenile justice, but no references were found to life experience as it intersects with race and ethnicity in equipping staff to perform professional and nonprofessional duties.

Conclusion

The benefits of LEWs in juvenile justice can outweigh the potential pitfalls of hiring ex-offenders, according to programs that have done so. LEWs can easily relate to a juvenile offender, they can instill hope in the ability to change, since they embody that change, and they can also dispel the myths that gang involvement, substance abuse, and criminal activity are glamorous. LEWs can make a significant impact through their experience, their lifestyle, and their commitment to help a new generation of youth in the system from which LEWs "graduated." But the characteristics of prior life experience are not weighed heavily in the numerous proposals for reform of the juvenile justice system.

Overall Conclusions

What has emerged from this assessment of the four fields can be summarized with two cross-cutting conclusions:

- The use of LEWs appears likely to increase, due to a combination of demographic changes as older professionals retire, the costs of workforce health coverage and retirement as these costs become larger and more visible, and the growing realization of the programmatic benefits that result from use of these workers.

- The effort to utilize LEWs is much further along than the effort to use these workers *strategically*, by which we mean efforts that meet three criteria:
    - There is a formal plan over time to increase their number,
    - There is a commitment to training and a job ladder, rather than simply hiring LEWs at the bottom of the pay scale,
    - There is an effort to align these workers with the rest of the systems in which they work. These workers are often "grafted onto" these four systems, rather than integrated in a way that reflects a clear concept of how life experience can supplement professional skills in each field.

A third conclusion is more tentative. Competency-based education and recruiting is relevant to the attempt to expand use of LEWs, but only to the extent that competency-defined staffing is accepted by state and local agencies. Higher education-based efforts to provide LEWs with credentials and units toward degrees may adopt a fairly traditional approach to professional education, requiring these workers to start on the bottom rungs of the system regardless of their experience. Alternatively, more innovative forms of education and training may include credit for demonstrated competency based on refinements of the definitions of competencies that are emerging in each of the four fields. These choices about the status and standing given to LEWs raise basic issues of legitimacy about who has the right to train and educate professionals and to judge whether that training and education is of adequate quality.

In each of the four fields, LEWs are perceived differently.

- In child welfare, case aides are generally accepted as paraprofessionals or very junior professionals. When they enter employment with a history "in the system," judgments tend to be made based on the nature of that history, with foster parents treated very differently from parents who have had children removed and then been reunified with them. Parents with histories of substance abuse and family violence are used for outreach activities, but it is rare that they would be fully accepted as part of a treatment team.
- In youth work, former foster youth are perceived as significant assets in working with younger youth. In other youth development programs, youth workers are widely accepted as nonprofessional adjunct staff, and in more community-based programs, they tend to be accepted more fully.

- In ECE, the widespread use of teacher aides and parents as staff in community-based programs and the emphasis in Head Start and other programs on upward mobility makes this arena the most hospitable to LEWs.
- In juvenile justice, limited use of ex-offenders appears to remain confined primarily to demonstration programs.

To summarize, the more community-based the agency is, and the less stigmatized the worker's prior experience in the system, the more widely accepted LEWs seem to be in the four fields.

The Four Policy Questions Revisited

At the outset, in our introductory section, we asked four policy questions. Here they are restated with the best answers we believe can be provided based on work in the four fields.

- ***If these LEWs are at present (or may potentially become in the near future) a substantial segment of the human services workforce, how much effort should be devoted to recruiting, training, and retaining them compared with similar efforts aimed at professional workers?***

We believe that a greater effort should be made to address the need for LEWs, and that such an effort should command a greater proportion of the resources now allocated to the task of improving the entire workforce. The current proportions are impossible to fix, but it seems hard to defend the current disproportionate emphasis now given to professionals as the core of reform in the workforce. Given the following considerations

  - the potential numbers we have cited, both in emerging vacancies and potential new workers,
  - the potential reduction of burdens on hard-pressed professionals, and
  - the improved effectiveness that is evident in exemplary uses of LEWs,

we believe that movement toward increasing the small percentage of efforts now devoted to LEWs would be justified. But this raises the further question of where that new emphasis should be placed.

The current and potential numbers

Careful analysis of the limited data on LEWs is needed to answer a question of emphasis: Should greater priority be given to upgrading the LEWs now in the system or to recruiting new LEWs to replace those professionals who are leaving? To what extent can LEWs take on more professional roles as their training and frontline experience increase?

If we accept the estimate that about 10 percent of the current work force has some form of life experience—including both those with degrees and credentials who were hired based on some attention given to their life experience and those without credentials—then at present there are approximately 300,000-500,000 LEWs in the workforce. This

assumes that the percentage is higher in ECE and lower in other systems such as child welfare.

If we make some very preliminary assumptions about the size of the potential workforce, and assume that 5-10 percent of all parents, youth, and others now or previously "in the systems" as clients could become LEWs, then the range is 800,000-1.6 million potential LEWs.[136] That suggests careful balance between both new and existing LEWs, with a greater emphasis on exploring how larger numbers could be attracted to these four fields over the next 5-10 years. And that, in part, takes us back to the issues discussed in the second section of this paper about the future of higher education as the supply side of training and education for LEWs and the question of how well those institutions can respond to the needs of LEWs.

- ***Do LEWs represent a strategy that will reduce turnover in the human services workforce, while improving or leaving quality constant?***

The answer to this question presupposes decisions that have not been made and information that is not readily available in most of the efforts to address HSW issues: What is the total gap in each workforce, and to what extent is each of the four fields going to have the resources to make up those gaps? LEWs in the form of aides, parents, and volunteers represent a sizable resource across the four fields. But they will only affect turnover if they are actively sought out through a more formal effort that must include either increases in resources or redirection of existing human resources budgets.

In suggesting at the beginning of this section that LEWs are not being added in a way that is yet strategic, we are in effect calling for a rethinking in each of the four fields of the potential for LEWs to be used strategically. Otherwise, these efforts are likely to remain scattered, small-scale, fragmented, and rarely evaluated for their effectiveness in helping clients or increasing the efficiency of the rest of the workforce.

- ***How will the barriers between professionals and non-professionals be reduced so that they can work together effectively?***

The models we have reviewed in the four fields include examples of cooperative relations among professionals and their LEW counterparts. But the extent of the barriers described makes clear that only an organized effort to reduce those barriers will have an impact. Relying upon natural dissemination of better practices from isolated sites seems unlikely to persuade skeptical professionals, their national and statewide associations, and the academic establishments behind their education and training that these barriers should be eliminated or reduced significantly. The professional associations must take the lead; encouragement from funders will help, but if this is seen as a marginal afterthought by professional associations and higher education, it will remain marginal in its impact. It may also require more efforts by bargaining units and service unions, who have an opportunity to represent both sides of the relationship. But there was little that we could locate that addressed the challenges to unions of working to improve these relationships beyond the core issues of pay and benefits.

In fact, there were few sources we could locate that addressed the professional-LEW relationship in any depth. Numerous people cited the issues as real and widespread, but few were aware of any formal reviews of those issues. One source, questioned about the relationship, speculated that the ultimate determinant of positive working relationships is a matter of personality. This practitioner pointed out that some workers are self-confident enough to be willing to give almost anyone a chance to be helpful, while others are more protective about their own skills and education and less willing to allow a less-skilled worker to trespass in the professional's area of control and supposed expertise. Another source made a somewhat different distinction, relying on the literature distinguishing between client-centered and agency-centered organizations, and noting that the more client-centered a professional is, the more she will be willing to see what a worker with life experience really has to offer—simply because the professional recognizes that the LEW was a client and knows about clients and because the work is *about* helping and working with clients.

- ***How can better information be collected on the value and impact of LEWs?***

In part, this question needs to be answered separately in each of the four fields, since evaluation efforts are so disparate.

- Child welfare: The evaluation literature here addresses some of the advantages of parents working with other parents, and the related substance abuse literature has documented significant improvements using LEWs in recovery to engage clients needing drug and alcohol treatment.
- ECE: The evaluations of ECE effectiveness are focused almost entirely on the substantiation that more education of the workforce improves child outcomes. The use of parent aides is widespread, but the data on their effectiveness is not extensive.
- Youth development: Here and in juvenile justice there are few evaluations; the HIV-related projects mentioned in the YD section are an important exception.
- Juvenile justice: see above

The question of documenting the benefits of LEWs can be addressed in each field, but the recommendations of the statement produced by the Wingspread Conference on youth development workers could easily be adapted for all four fields:

> [We need t]he creation of basic evaluation approaches that address key questions, including whether and how professional development improves practice and whether and how improved practice leads to improved youth outcomes.
>
> - Develop and launch a proactive research and evaluation agenda that is integrated into and guides the transformation of the youth work professional development system and that assesses its progress and effectiveness;
> - Develop a research and evaluation agenda to guide the transformation of the youth work professional development system;
> - Seek out and establish research partnerships to advocate for and advance the work;
> - Initiate studies that test assumptions and engage youth workers;

- Utilize technology to more quickly and deeply understand the issues from broader and deeper perspectives—especially that of youth workers themselves.[137]

A final caveat, repeated

A point we have sought to make throughout bears repeating: Advocating for expanded use of life experienced workers does not require criticizing professionals or professional education. The deep anti-intellectual strain in American life, as assessed in Richard Hofstadter's classic work *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* (1963) and exemplified in George Wallace's inveighing against "pointy-headed bureaucrats," should not be under-emphasized. Nor should it be dismissed as harmless political bloviating. If the case for life experience is used as a rhetorical tool to criticize "book learning" rather than "practical experience," a fruitless debate will waste time and energy.

The point about life experience is not that it is better than academic curricula or hands-on experience in an organization; the point is that it can be a critical supplement to those needed ingredients in achieving professional work that helps clients. Human services agencies need to draw on both kinds of competence and both sources of commitment in addressing the challenges of the 21st century workforce—and the needs of its clients. In a single sentence, a review of competencies in the behavioral health field summarized this inclusive vision:

> There are multiple pathways to competence, which may include elements of personal experience, training, and professional development.[138]

Recommendations and Next Steps to Consider

Overall

1. In all fields, more study and surveys are needed that identify in greater depth how many LEWs work in each of the systems and under what circumstances. The surveys of professionals undertaken by several national and state organizations in the last five years should be updated and expanded to include non- and paraprofessionals, probing for the extent and characteristics of LEWs in the work force.
2. Drawing upon the lessons of links between Head Start and higher education, model curricula should be disseminated to agencies employing LEWs to assist them in developing more formal and active staff and professional development efforts aimed at LEWs.
3. A summary of the current status of competency-based recruitment and education in each of the four fields should be developed to determine whether expanded hiring of LEWs is likely to result from current approaches to defining and utilizing competencies
4. In all four fields, seek public and private funding for stronger evaluations of the impact of LEWs on institutional and client outcomes.

<u>Child Welfare</u>

5. Support efforts in schools of social work and other institutions involved in education of child welfare workers to identify and work with LEWs, including
   a. curriculum that would enable life experience to be incorporated in class assignments in ways that do not require inappropriate disclosure of personal history
   b. further work to refine competencies for child welfare work so that appropriate full or partial credit could be given for life experience in coursework and internships
6. Explore models of using Title IVE programs for training and higher education for LEWs, as discussed in the Dreyfus and Horning report for the Alliance for Children and Families.

<u>Early Care and Education</u>

7. Continue the growing emphasis in the ECE field on upward mobility and improving pay, with more focus on LEWs in the field
8. Review the staffing gaps to determine whether more deliberate efforts to recruit LEWs could help reduce gaps

<u>Youth Development</u>

9. Work with institutions of higher education that have developed degree programs for youth workers to add components for LEWs who may be able to seek formal degrees or who may wish to add course credits for advancement in pay and responsibility, as is done widely in ECE.

Juvenile Justice

10. Explore options with juvenile justice agencies and their funders for projects that focus evaluation efforts on LEWS in this field
11. Assess the degree to which prohibitions against ex-offenders' employment may constrain use of LEWs in the juvenile justice field

NOTES

[1] These numbers are based upon the landmark work done by Janice Nittoli and Paul Light in papers supported by the Casey Foundation: Janice Nittoli, *The Unsolved Challenge of System Reform: The Quality of Frontline Human Services Workers* (Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003); Paul C. Light, "The Health of the Human Services Workforce" (New York: Center for Public Service/The Brookings Institution/ Wagner School Of Public Service, New York University, 2003).

[2] Nittoli, ibid.

[3] The 2004 Child Welfare Workforce Survey State Agency Findings (Washington, DC: American Public Human Services Association, February 2005), 16.

[4] Nittoli, op.cit. Light, op.cit.

[5] We are not typically using the label "paraprofessionals" in this report unless it has been used by other sources, because this connotes *sub-professional*, while "life-experienced workers" identifies the assets that these workers bring to their work, rather than defining them as what they are not.

[6] Brown, V.B. and Worth, "Recruiting, Training and Maintaining Consumer Staff: Strategies Used and Lessons Learned" (Culver City, CA: PROTOTYPES Systems Change Center, 2002), 2. The Prototypes project was funded by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

[7] These numbers are drawn from Nittoli's report, see note 1 above.

[8] "…unlicensed family childcare providers…comprise more than 80 percent of the approximately one million family care homes in the US," Nittoli, op.cit., 8.

[9] Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006-07 Edition*, Social and Human Service Assistants, http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos059.htm.

[10] Susan Robison, "Promising Approaches to Recruiting and Retaining Quality Child Welfare Workers," presented at a meeting of Cornerstone for Kids, October 24, 2005, http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/profess/workforce/conf_videos/robinson.pdf

[11] Brown and Worth, op. cit. 3; Weibel, W., *The indigenous leader outreach model: Intervention manual* (Rockville, MD: National Institutes of Health. 1993); Dixon, L. Krauss, N., and Lehman, A., (1994). "Consumers as Service Providers: The Promise and the Challenge," *Community Mental Health Journal* 30, no. 6 (1994): 615-625; Weissman, G. and Brown, V., "Drug-using women and HIV: Risk-reduction and prevention issues" in *Women At Risk: Issues in the Primary Prevention of AIDS*, eds. O'Leary, A. & Jemmott, L.S. (New York: Plenum Press, 1995).

[12] The concept of services integration over time draws upon a forthcoming monograph by Mr. Gardner titled "Time After Time: Reflections on Forty Years of Collaboration and Service Integration."

[13] http://www.selfhelpweb.org/inmemoriam.html. "New Careers trained poor persons of all ages at a pre-professional level in public service fields in which there was a shortage of qualified persons, such as in health, education and public safety" http://www.dol.gov/asp/programs/history/dolchp06.htm. The classic work by Reissman and David Carroll, *Redefining Self-Help: Policy and Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995) sets forth a much more detailed and nuanced argument for self-help programs, linking self-help staffing to changes in the health field and in prevention programs and warning against media-driven trivialization of self-help as a set of "movements" rather than an antidote to what they term "expertism, mystification, exclusivity, elitism, and professional privatization of knowledge," (197).

[14] Minnesota has a paraprofessional clearinghouse at http://ici2.umn.edu/para/New/Spotlight/Past/MNSCU.htm; the U.S. Department of Labor has a website on teacher paraprofessionals at http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos153.htm. See also article on paraprofessionals becoming teachers at http://www.sreb.org/scripts/Focus/Reports/Focus-Paraprofessionals.pdf.

[15] A national peer helper network exists: http://www.peerprograms.org/. See also http://www.schoolcounselor.com/training/peerhelping.htm. In addition, many mentoring programs exist, although a distinction is useful between professionals who are volunteering, as in Big Brothers and Sisters, and mentors who are more in the "coaching" role. See a California version of a clearinghouse: http://www.mentors.ca/mentorprograms.html and http://www.peer.ca/mentor.html.

[16] In what White has labeled the "New Recovery Movement" "wounded healers are also beginning to become 'recovery activists,' turning their 'personal stories into social action' …Instead of working solely on their own addiction problems, recovering persons and their supporters would mobilize their strengths in order to change 'the ecology of addiction and recovery' These and other mutual aid efforts are thought to help transform individuals from being part of the problem into being part of the solution as they give their time in the service of helping others." "Toward a New Recovery Movement: Historical Reflections on Recovery, Treatment and Advocacy," William L. White (prepared for the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment Recovery Community Support Program Conference, "Working Together for Recovery," April 3-5, 2000) 16, 19.

[17] Richard L. Kearns, James T. Girvan, Willis J. McAleese, "Differences in the Self-Reported Spiritual Health Of Male Juvenile Offenders And Non-Offenders" *American Journal of Health Studies* 14 no.3 (1998): 113-119; Peter L. Benson, Peter C. Scales, Arturo Sesma, Jr., and Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, "Adolescent Spirituality," Search Institute http://www.childtrends.org/Files/AdolescentSpirituality-paper.pdf; Patrick Love Donna Talbot, "Defining Spiritual Development: A Missing Consideration for Student Affairs," *NASPA JOURNAL* 37 no. 1 (Fall 1999).

[18] Charles W. Meinert and Sherry Penney, "Credit for Life Experience: Establishing Institutional Policy and Procedures," *Journal of Higher Education* 46 no. 3 (May-June, 1975): 339-348. It should also be added, and will be discussed below, that some institutions have moved beyond legitimate credit for life experience and devised pay-for-degrees schemes that have cost the whole effort some credibility.

[19] While social work is not the only profession that is relevant, its practitioners are much less representative of the nation's ethnic makeup than its clients, as the 2005 NASW report makes clear: *Assuring the Sufficiency of a Frontline Workforce: A National Study of Licensed Social Workers Preliminary Report* (Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers, 2005).

[20] Recent fiscal disasters in San Diego and other jurisdictions, combined with increasing federal oversight and market interest in state and local compliance with GAPP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles) make it less likely that unfunded pension and health cost liabilities will be invisible; see Josh Goodman, "Issues to Watch," *Governing* (January 2006).

[21] These roles are suggestive only, and feedback on approaches to refining the categories is welcomed.

[22] CPS Human Resource Services, *What Counts? A Report on Workforce Planning Data Used by the Nation's Ten Largest Human Service Agencies.* (Sacramento, CA: CPS, 2005),1. http://www.cps.ca.gov/ConsultingServices/HSRC/What_Counts.pdf. This source reveals a common approach to defining "skill sets" that may reveal attitudes toward LEWs: "educational attainment," agency-provided training, languages spoken, and computer skills are the only mentioned information on skill sets that were sought, (7, 12).

[23] Light, "Health of the Human Service Workforce," 6: "46 percent described their co-workers as somewhat or not too qualified,… 42 percent estimated that more than a tenth of their co-workers were not doing their jobs well."

[24] Brittain, Charmaine and Hunt, Deborah Esquibel, *Helping in child protective services: a competency-based casework handbook. 2nd ed.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[25] Pecora, P. J. and Austin, M. J., (1983) "Declassification of social service jobs: Issues and Strategies," *Social Work* 28 (1983): 421–425.

[26] Richard W. Hurd and John Bungel, "Unionization of Professional and Technical Workers: The Labor Market and Institutional Transformation," condensed version of chapter in *Emerging Labor Market Institutions for the Twenty-First Century*, eds., R. Freeman, J. Hersch, and L. Mishel (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2005).

[27] D. Olds, J. Robinson, R. O'Brien, D. Luckey, L. Pettit, R. Ng, K. Sheff, et al., "Home visiting by paraprofessionals and by nurses: a randomized control trial," *Pediatrics* 110 no. 3 (2002): 486-497.

[28] Neil B. Guterman, *Stopping Child Maltreatment Before It Starts; Emerging Horizons in Early Home Visitation Services* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), 82-89.

[29] "In 2000, social work education programs graduated about 15,000 new BSWs and 16,000 new MSWs…. In fact, 78 percent of all licensed social workers provide services to clients age 21 or younger, regardless of the practice setting or focus….Eighty-four percent of new graduates (2000-2004) work with some children and/or adolescents…. the use of non-social workers and outsourcing increases in agencies with greater involvement with children and adolescents…. Outsourcing job functions or hiring less qualified applicants is another symptom of labor market shortages. Twenty-three percent of social workers report their agencies outsource social work jobs, and 28 percent report that social work positions were filled by individuals who lack professional social work training. … One of the critical questions for the social work profession is whether there will be sufficient numbers of social workers to meet the needs of society in the future, especially to provide services to a growing number of vulnerable children and families. Yet, even as demand for services increases, social workers report vacancy rates in their agencies that are alarming. More distressing is the agency practice of hiring individuals without social work training to perform social work jobs. This practice not only disadvantages individuals by placing them in situations for which they are not prepared, but worse, increases the vulnerability of families who turn to these agencies for help." Whitaker, T., Weismiller, T., and Clark, E. (2006). *Assuring the sufficiency of a frontlineworkforce: A national study of licensed social workers. Special report: Social work services for children and families (*Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers, 2006).

[30] *Training for paraprofessionals: The Community College Role* (Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, date unknown).

[31]Charles W. Meinert and Sherry Penney, "Credit for Life Experience: Establishing Institutional Policy and Procedures," *Journal of Higher Education* 46, no. 3 (May-June, 1975): 339-348.

[32] B. Wilson, "Trends and Futures of Education: Implications for Distance Education," for inclusion in a special issue of the *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, edited by Les Moller (October 2001).

[33] The *New York Times* reports that "They [Milken and Allen] say they will turn the $700 billion education sector into 'the next health care'—that is, transform large portions of a fragmented, cottage industry of independent, nonprofit institutions into a consolidated, professionally managed, money-making set of businesses that include all levels of education." "Investors See Room for Profit in the Demand for Education," *New York Times* (November 4, 2004).

[34] "Amending the future of higher education," (July 20, 2006) http://institutionalperformance.typepad.com/institutional_performance/program_accountability/index.html

[35] Alex Wellen, "Degrees of Acceptance," *The New York Times* (July 30, 2006).

[36] Entering the phrase "life experience degrees" in an Internet search engine will quickly make this clear.

[37] CPS Human Resource Services, "Tomorrow's Vacancies, Today's Priority: Michigan Family Independence Agency's Centrally Coordinated Hiring Pool Summary Report" (Sacramento, CA: CPS, 2005), 8,http://www.cps.ca.gov/ConsultingServices/HSRC/mifia.asp.

[38] Susan N. Dreyfus and Susan Dean Hornung, "Child Welfare Workforce: Implications for the Private Nonprofit Sector" (Milwaukee, WI: Alliance for Children and Families, 2006), 14-16, http://www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/child_welfare_Implica_606.pdf

[39] Chapin Hall Center for Children, *Traditional Juvenile Justice vs. Positive Youth Development,* Issue Brief #105 (October 2005), 7.

[40] CASA refers to the Court-Appointed Special Advocates who work as volunteers with children in the child welfare system.

[41] http://www.socialworkers.org/resources/workforce/files/NASW_SWCassuring_3.pdf. NASW study notes that children and family workers tend to be younger than social workers in general.

[42] The data underlying these generalizations are not extensive, to say the least. An informal survey of two county agencies is the basis for these estimates, including feedback from human resources administrators in these systems.

[43] U.S. General Accounting Office, *Child welfare: HHS could play a greater role in helping child wefare agencies recruit and retain staff* (Washington, DC: GAO, 2003); available at www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-357

[44] Dale Weaver and Janet Chang, *The Retention of California's Public Child Welfare Workers* (Berkeley, CA: California Social Work Education Center University of California, Berkeley School of Social Welfare, October 2004), 93.

[45] American Public Human Services Association, *Report from the 2004 child welfare workforce survey: State agency findings* (Washington, DC: Author, 2005).

[46] "Retention Planning to Reduce Workforce Turnover in New York State's Public Child Welfare Systems" (New York: SWEC, 2005), 43.

[47] For example, the recent *Self-assessment Workbook for Building a Stable and Quality Child Welfare Workforce* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2006) does not address entry-level employees, prior experience of the workforce, or allocation of roles between professionals and non-professionals and workers without degrees or credentials. One exception is a reference to "Broadbanding or the ability to offer higher entry-level classifications to increase entry level salary flexibility particularly for those who have previous relevant experience or particular language or cultural competencies," (12).

[48] Freda Bernotavicz, "Retention Of Child Welfare Caseworkers: A Report" (Institute for Public Sector Innovation, Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service University of Southern Maine, 2000) http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/pubstext/retention.htm.

[49] *National Study of Child Protective Services Systems and Reform Efforts: Site Visits Report,* Chapter 6 (La Crosse County, WI: Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc. May 2003) http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/CPS-status03/site-visits/ch6.htm

[50] Merit System Services, *Promising Practices;* U.S. General Accounting Office, *op cit*.

[51] Susan Robison, *Toward a High-Quality Child Welfare Workforce: Six Doable Steps* (Houston, TX: Cornerstones for Kids 2006), 16

[52] Dreyfus and Hornung, "Child Welfare Workforce," http://www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/child_welfare_Implica_606.pdf

[53] M. Shirk, "Hunting for Grandma," *Youth Today* (February 2006) http://www.ussearch.com/others/consumer/reunion/youthtoday.html.

[54] This is a very approximate number drawn from FY 2001 federal data at http://pewfostercare.org/docs/index.php?DocID=24; it assumes the 148,000 children who were reunified with parents that year included some two-or-more-child cases and a mix of single-parent and two-parent families.

[55] This assumes an average of 20 percent turnover among the 900,000 child welfare workers, as reported in the APHSA 2005 document. However, the 2005 NASW report found that in 2000, only 15,000 BSWs and 16,000 new MSWs were granted degrees—in all fields.

[56] 74,000 volunteers devoted approximately 10 million hours to cases in 2003, equivalent to $461 million in taxpayer dollars, if they had been compensated for their services. http://www.casanet.org/index.htm.

[57] James E. Sabin and Norman Daniels, "Strengthening the Consumer Voice in Managed Care: The Georgia Peer Specialist Program," *Psychiatric Services* 54 no.4 (April 2003).

[58] Cuyahoga County Dept. of Children and Family Services, *S.T.A.R.T.: Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams* (Cleveland, OH: Author, Technical Report, 1998).

[59] http://www.cffutures.org/docs/ON_TIME/3-21_NY_files/frame.htm.

[60] http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/pdf/TASC_Coach_Program.pdf.

[61] T. M. Grant, C. C. Ernst, et al., "Intervention with high-risk alcohol and drug-abusing mothers: I. Administrative strategies of the Seattle model of paraprofessional advocacy," *Journal of Community Psychology* 27 no.1 (1999): 1-18.

[62] Michael A. Hoge, Janis Tondora, and Anne F. Marrelli, "The Fundamentals of Workforce Competency: Implications for Behavioral Health," *Administration and Policy in Mental Health* 32, no. 5/6 (May/July 2005). See also William White, "The history and future of peer-based addiction recovery support services," prepared for the SAMHSA Consumer and Family Direction Initiative., 2004 Summit, Washington, DC, March 22-23, 2004.

[63] Alameda County, California, is creating three new service integration units. Cross-classification teams will be formed and will include a child welfare worker, a social worker from adult services and aging, a TANF eligibility technician, an employment counselor, and a paraprofessional welfare services aide to be drawn from among former clients. The staff will be co-located to allow teams to draw on the expertise of their various members. It is expected that over time the workers will learn from one another and become less professionally specialized and will master a wider-ranging set of skills. From Urban Institute evaluation of CWS-welfare links, http://www.urban.org/publications/310225.html.

[64] http://www.frc.merced.k12.ca.us/CAPCWeb/policies-&-procedures.htm#PP5B ; http://www.sanctuaryforfamilies.org/clinicalservices.htm; http://med.stanford.edu/community/models-mentors/marsico_abstract.html.

[65] *1999 Annual Report to Congress on the Evaluation of the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program.* "During the final year of funding, sites deeply appreciated and relied on paraprofessional and support services (e.g., respite, behavioral aides, family support groups, parent aides, family advocacy support). In almost all sites, these were the services most requested by families, and sites were very creative in finding ways to provide them. For example, many sites used community-based organizations as contract service providers. Frequently, family organizations

(or a family team within the grant agency) were the primary providers of respite and family support services. Increasingly, professionals are recognizing the helpfulness of natural and informal supports. Care Parents need parent aides more than they need therapy. In addition, paraprofessional and family support service were those most frequently provided in home- or community-based settings (e.g., community centers). In some sites, these services were Medicaid reimbursable. This helped to ensure their long-term sustainability. In other sites, flexible funds or other non-categorical funds had to be used to pay for the services. Many respondents expressed concerns that after grant funding ended, maintaining these services without billing Medicaid would become more difficult. Despite increased recognition that such services are beneficial and family centered, their long-term future is uncertain." http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/CB-E199/arc992.asp.

[66] *Community Health Workers: Closing Gaps in Families' Health Resources*, Family Strengthening Policy Center Brief No. 14, National Human Services Assembly (2006), 5, http://www.nassembly.org/fspc/practice/documents/Brief14.pdf.

[67] "Guidelines for Computing Caseload Standards," http://www.cwla.org/programs/standards/caseloadstandards.htm.

[68] GAO, op cit., 5.

[69] L., Costin, H. Karger, and D. Stoesz, T*he politics of child abuse and neglect in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996),158.

[70] P. J. Pecora, and M.J. Austin, "Declassification of social service jobs: Issues and Strategies," *Social Work 28* (1983): 421–425.

[71] A. Ellett and L. Leighninger, "What Happened? An Historical Analysis of the De-professionalization of Child Welfare with Implications for Policy and Practice," *Journal of Public Child Welfare* I no. 1 (2007): 19.

[72] Robison, op.cit. 23-24.

[73] http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/pubstext/retention.htm.

[74] J. Zlotnick, et al., *Factors Influencing Retention of Child Welfare Staff: A Systematic Review of Research*, A Report from the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research, in collaboration with University of Maryland School of Social Work Center for Families & Institute for Human Services Policy (June 2005).

[75] The terminology in early care and education programs is challenging, with different factions of the field using different terms. We are using "ECE" to connote the full range of care and education programs, ranging from informal, non-legal or unlicensed in-home custodial care on one extreme up to Head Start and highest-end child development programs on the other. The 2002 CCCW report (Alice Burton, Marcy Whitebook, Marci Young, Dan Bellm, Claudia Wayne, Richard Brandon, and Erin Maher, *Estimating the Size and Components of the U.S. Child Care Workforce and Caregiving Population: Key Findings from the Child Care Workforce Estimate* -Preliminary Report (Washington, DC: Center for the Child Care Workforce, 2002], 5) sets up its definition for child care as follows:

> The term "child care" is used in this report as a generic term to encompass the many types of early care and education programs serving children ages 0-5, including such center-based programs as nursery schools, pre-kindergarten programs, Head Start, and public and private child care centers, and such home-based services as family child care and care by relatives or other non-parental care givers. Where appropriate, the report distinguishes among program types such as Head Start and pre-kindergarten programs. 5

[76] http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2005/tabF1-all.csv.

[77] *California Early Care and Education Workforce Study: Licensed Child Care Centers and Family Child CareECE Providers Statewide Highlights* (Berkeley: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California at Berkeley and California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, June 2006).

[78] Walter S. Gilliam, "Prekindergarteners Left Behind: Expulsion Rates in State Prekindergarten Systems" (New Haven, CT: Yale University Child Study Center) http://www.fcd-us.org/PDFs/NationalPreKExpulsionPaper03.02_new.pdf.

[79] "Special needs" in the NHES-99 survey is defined as having at least one of the following conditions: learning disability, mental retardation speech impairment, serious emotional disturbance, deafness or other hearing impairment, blindness or other visual impairment, an orthopedic impairment, or another health impairment lasting six months or more.

[80] "Mentor Parent programs" http://www.php.com/include/programs/showInfo.php?ID=38&where_keywords; The federal Office of Special Education Programs also has several technical assistance sites and resources oriented to parents' roles in caring for children with special needs: http://www.ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/resources.html#parents and http://www.taalliance.org/centers/index.htm

[81] *California Early Care and Education Workforce Study*, 8.

[82] http://www.mailman.org/index.htm.

[83] http://www.ccw.org/pubs/2004Compendium.pdf.

[84] http://www.bls.gov/oes/2004/may/oes252011.htm#nat.

[85] http://www.santacruz.k12.ca.us/alt_ed/schools/tap/childcare.html.

[86] M. Manter, "Designing a Career Development and Management System for Head Start," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families: *Head Start Bulletin*, Issue No. 72 (2002) http://www.headstartinfo.org/publications/hsbulletin72/hsb72_17.htm.

[87] PART 1304—PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR THE OPERATION OF HEAD START PROGRAMS BY GRANTEE AND DELEGATE AGENCIES (Eff. 1–1–98).

[88] http://www.headstartinfo.org/pdf/1304.pdf.

[89] Dan Bellm, *Establishing Teacher Competencies in Early Care and Education: A Review of Current Models and Options for California* (Berkeley: Center for the Study of ECE Employment. Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California at Berkeley, 2006).

[90] "Implications of the National Research Council's Study: Community Programs to Promote Youth Development," presented by Community Network for Youth Development and John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities.

[91] Nittoli, *The Unsolved Challenge of System Reform*.

[92] Ibid., 8.

[93] *Youth-to-Youth-Peer Workers in HIV/AIDS Youth Programs: A Peer Development Guide*, developed by the Indiana Youth Group, offers a snapshot look at various models of care integrating peer staff and life experienced workers. See also, Barbara Stone, Pam Garza, Lynne Borden, *Attracting, Developing &*

Retaining Youth Workers for the Next Generation: Report of a Wingspread Conference (Washington, DC: National Collaboration for Youth/National Human Services Assembly, 2005).

[94] N. Yohalem, K. Pittman, K. and D. Moore, *Growing the Next Generation of Youth Work Professionals: Workforce Opportunities and Challenges* (Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth Investment, July 2006).

[95] Stone, et al., *Attracting*, 4.

[96] Wingspread Conference, (2004). Summary from interviews conducted for the Wingspread conference. Attracting, Developing and Retaining Youth Workers for the Next Generation.

[97] K.J. Pittman, "Reflections of the road (not yet) taken: How a centralized public strategy can help youth work focus on youth," *Professional Development for Youth Workers: New Directions for Youth Development*, eds., P. Garza, L.M. Borden, K.A., Astroth (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2005).

[98] Jeffrey A. Butts, Susan Mayer, and Gretchen Ruth Cusick, *Focusing Juvenile Justice on Positive Youth Development*, Issue Brief 105 (Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, October 2005).

[99] Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, *Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for a New Century* (New York: Author, 1995); R. Catalano, M. Berglund, J. Ryan, H. Lonczak, and D. Hawkins, *Positive Youth Development in the United States: Research and Evaluations of Positive Youth Development Programs* (Seattle, WA: Social Development Research Group, University of Washington, School of Social Work Seattle, 1998) states: "Social competence is the range of interpersonal skills that help youth integrate feelings, thinking, and actions in order to achieve specific social and interpersonal goals" (citing M.Z. Caplan et al., "Social competence promotion with inner-cty and suburban young adolescents: Effects on social adjustment and alcohol use," Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 60 (1992): 56-63). Weissberg, Caplan & Sivo, 1989). "These skills include encoding relevant social cues; accurately interpreting those social cues; generating effective solutions to interpersonal problems; realistically anticipating consequences and potential obstacles to one's actions; and translating social decisions into effective behavior" (citing Elias et al., "The school-based promotion of social competence: Theory, research, practice, and policy," R. J. Haggerty, N. Garmezy, M. Rutter, and L. Sherrod (Eds.), *Stress, risk and resilience in children and adolescence: Processes, mechanisms, and interventions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 269-315).

[100] Personal communication from David Lah of the U.S. Department of Labor- Employment and Training Administration.

[101] Information provided by Marion Pines, Director of The Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies, Baltimore, Maryland, www.levitan.org.

[102] The program is housed in the Department of Human Services, which already offers an AA degree in human services. Two concentrated courses were developed specifically for the certificate.

[103] YouthNet is a youth development intermediary organization.

[104] This credential program is for anyone 18 and over with no formal education beyond a high school diploma or whose post-secondary education is in an unrelated field. The credential requires 135 contact hours of college instruction/training that covers specified areas and levels of competence; 45 hours of course work, non-formal training and/or experience, and at least 480 hours of experience working with youth.

[105] An innovative course of study that trains university students to become skilled professionals in youth and human services agencies.

[106] This is an online degree program. Twenty-eight credits are offered through the consortium, with the remaining eight credits allowing degree candidates to take courses that further their specialization.

[107] Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice, Prevention, Rehabilitation and Community Protection, http://djj.ky.gov/

[108] The National BEST Initiative has received support from the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds, The Ford Foundation, and The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

[109] Bill Alexander, "Degrees of Separation: College-Linked Training Spreads, But Does It Improve Youth Work?" *Youth Today* (May 2002).

[110] Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, *Structural Racism and Youth Development: Issues, Challenges, and Implications*.

[111] As defined by a working group of the National Collaboration for Youth in a project administered by the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research at the Academy for Educational Development. Taken from the Professional Development Series E-Newsletter, National Youth Development, 2003.

[112] Alexander, "Degrees of Separation." A report by the National 4-H Council, *Educating Youth Development Professionals: Current Realities, Future Potential*, states that degree programs offered by colleges and universities focus more on program management than on skills needed by youth workers. Courses applicable to youth are found in numerous departments and degrees are not specific to what a youth worker does. Only a few universities have the specific knowledge, faculty, and skill-based programs needed to teach about youth workers.

[113] The National Youth Development Learning Network is a project of the National Collaboration for Youth, a coalition of youth-serving agencies that collectively serves more than 40 million youth, employs over 100,000 paid staff, and utilizes more than six million volunteers. They publish a National Youth Development E-Newsletter.

[114] Dorothy Ansell, MSW, Program Director, National Resource Center for Youth Services, The University of Oklahoma. Ansell's expertise is in permanency for adolescents, life skills, and independent living.

[115] *Youth-to-Youth-Peer Workers in HIV/AIDS Youth Programs,* "An overview," www.measurementgroup.com/publications/reports/peermanual/Sec.3htm.

[116] Ibid., "Overview of HRSA/HAB's SPNS Adolescent Care Projects," www.measurementgroup.com/publications/reports/peermanual/over.htm.

[117] Ibid., "Section 3: Adults and Youth Working Together: The Bay Area Young Positives, Health Initatives for Youth, Walden House, and YouthCare Experience," www.measurementgroup.com/publications/reports/peermanual/Sec.3htm.

[118] Ibid.

[119] With this model, no benefits are provided; however, a higher rate is offered to offset this. Internships are six months, and youth can serve a maximum of two terms in the same position.

[120] Chapin Hall Center for Children, "Traditional Juvenile Justice," 7.

[121] Elvia Rodriguez, "We Are Soldiers," *The Link: Connecting Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare* Fall/Summer 2005.

[122] James Austin, Kelly Dedel Johnson, and Ronald Weitzer, "Alternatives to the Secure Detention and Confinement of Juvenile Offenders," *OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin* (September 2005): 13.

[123] Ibid., 21.

[124] Ibid., 14.

[125] National Council on Crime and Dependency, "Exploring the Effect of Juvenile Justice System Functioning and Employee Turnover on Recidivism Rates" (Houston, TX: Cornerstones for Kids, February 2006), 24-25, http://www.cornerstones4kids.org.

[126] National Council on Crime and Delinquency, "Job Turnover in Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice: The Voices of Former Frontline Workers" (Houston, TX: Cornerstones for Kids, February 2006), 26, http://www.cornerstones4kids.org.

[127] Tim Molloy, "Los Angeles County Probation Officers Walk Off Jobs," Associated Press, September 28, 2005.

[128] Jeff Barker, "Youth justice centers lack staff, training," *Baltimore Sun*, February 1, 2004.

[129] "Fact Sheet: The Privatization of Juvenile Corrections Facilities, Building Blocks for Youth," http://www.buildingblocksforyouth.org/issues/privatization/facts.html

[130] Barker, "Youth justice centers."

[131] Kathleen Chapman and William M. Hartnett, "Juvenile justice records crackdown would reveal problem workers," *Palm Beach Post*, December 5, 2004.

[132] William M. Hartnett and Kathleen Chapman, "Irked legislator to grill state officials on juvenile woes," *Palm Beach Post*, December 8, 2004.

[133] Kathleen Chapman and William M. Hartnett, "Florida's juvenile justice system: Revolving door for fired workers," *Palm Beach Post*, December 5, 2004.

[134] Harry J. Holzer, Steven Raphael, and Michael A. Stoll, *Employer Demand for Ex-Offenders: Recent Evidence from Los Angeles* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, March 2003).

[135] E. Poe-Yamagata and M. Jones, *And Justice for Some*, A second report in a series revealing racial disparities in the nation's juvenile justice system as part of the national Building Blocks for Youth Initiative 2000.

[136] This assumes that there are roughly—very roughly—5 million parents with childcare experience able to work in the ECE system, 3 million parents with child welfare history that involved reunification, 3 million youth and young adults with youth development, foster care, or juvenile justice history, and 5 million adults who have gone through employment and training agencies.

[137] B. Stone, P. Garza, L. Borden, *Attracting, Developing & Retaining Youth Workers for the Next Generation*, Wingspread conference Proceedings Report, (National Collaboration for Youth/National Human Services Assembly, National 4-H Headquarters, University of Arizona, School of Family and Consumer Sciences, 2004), 13.

[138] Michael A. Hoge, John A. Morris, Allen S. Daniels, Leighton Y. Huey, Gail W. Stuart, Neal Adams, Manuel Paris, Jr., Eric Goplerud, Constance M. Horgan, Linda Kaplan, Susan A. Storti, and Joan M. Dodge, "Report of Core Recommendations: The Annapolis Coalition Conference on Behavioral Health Workforce Competencies," *Administration and Policy in Mental Health* 32, no. 5 (2004), 651-663.